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Wedding gowns a sister's gift

Recent design school graduate makes bride's dream come true

By Anna Tesauro
The SouthtownStar

It's a day some young girls dream about: choosing flowers and shopping for the perfect wedding dress. For Sophia Reyes, 24, of Homer Glen, her sister's wedding was a dream come true in a different way.

Reyes is a recent graduate of Parsons School of Design in New York, and she had the privilege of designing eight bridesmaid dresses, her mother's dress and, yes, her sister Patricia's wedding gown.

"With weddings, it's a different design process. You want something they'll be comfortable in and able to wear again," Reyes said. "And also for the bride, I didn't want my sister looking at her pictures 10 years from now and hating the dress."

Reyes began designing and sewing the bridesmaid dresses in July, each gown requiring a month for measurements and fittings. In October, she got an unexpected request.

"My sister couldn't find a dress at any of the stores and asked me to design her dress," Reyes said.

Piecing together styles from various dresses, Reyes did her best to create her sister's dream gown while adding some flair of her own.

Reyes, and her family,



Photos by Jason Han / The SouthtownStar

Patricia Reyes' wedding dress was designed by her sister, Sophia Reyes. Piecing together styles from various dresses, Reyes created her sister's dream gown while adding some flair of her own.

were proud of the result.

Getting there

Reyes went to Lockport High School, then studied finance at Loyola University.

But when graduation neared, Reyes knew she had to choose between a career

in finance or pursue her dream of working in fashion.

"I realized how much more I liked fashion and wanted to get more training," Reyes said. "I've always known I wanted to start my own line."

Reyes went to New York

for a two-year program that she condensed to a year by taking the fast-track program. After working an internship with designer labels such as Kenneth Cole, Cynthia Rowley, Liz Claiborne and Laundry by Design, Reyes was ready to come

home and make her dream a reality. She put together 12 pieces for a spring/summer 2008 line, which is sold at www.studio808.com.

Reyes' line was runner-up at Macy's "distinction and

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design" competition in 2007. Her fall line will be available at studio808.com, Tangerine in Chicago's Wicker Park community, Totem in Hinsdale and Gray in Chicago's Old Town community. Her Web site is www.sophiareyes.com.

Lifelong dream

Despite being new to the industry, Reyes says she is ready for business growth.

"It was intimidating at first, but you learn to be persistent and to not be afraid of being rejected, and to not take it personally. It's definitely a learning experience," she said.

Reyes fell in love with sewing when she was 12, when her grandmother taught her the basics. It became a hobby, with Reyes making dresses and dreaming of having her own line.

"I used to hang out in Jo-Ann Fabrics and experiment with patterns. They never had what I was looking for, and I always wanted to design my own clothing and patterns,"



Jason Han / The SouthtownStar

Sophia Reyes' mother, Linda, looks out the window as Sophia, left, adjusts the bridesmaid dress of Trisha Capenigro of Glen Ellyn. Sophia also designed her mother's dress.

Reyes said.

While designing wedding and bridesmaid dresses is not her first choice, Reyes is glad to have given this gift to her sister. "Brides always want their wedding to be perfect. I'm just happy I could do something for my sister," she said.

Does she dream of designing her own wedding gown some day? Without hesitation, she said, "of course."

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