



fashion forward: fresh

Up & Cummers featured clothing designer Erin Healy



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The Up & Cummers, the Cummer Museums' group of young professionals, will host their annual fashion show, "Fashion Forward: Fresh," on Friday, September 26. The Up & Cummers has a board which consists of 12 volunteers from the corporate and civic community who meet once a month to plan social activities and events for the group. Fashion Forward is their biggest event of the year. Fashion Forward has been in development and planning by the board and a volunteer's committee since early Spring. The event brings together approximately 500 of Jacksonville's finest young professionals who share a love of fashion and the arts. Whitney Thompson, winner of America's Next Top Model on UPN will be featured as the "celebrity model" for the show.

This year's featured clothing designer is Erin Healy, a local fashion artist whose work is inspired by nature and our earth's natural surroundings, which is why "fresh" is the theme of this year's event. Healy took a break from her hectic schedule to speak with EU about the show and to explain her designs.

EU: Why do you think you were chosen to be the featured designer for this event?

Erin Healy: I was born and raised in Jacksonville, so I'm local. And I was at Art Walk and a couple of the members would come by and basically saw my stuff and were really impressed. Maggie [Hightower] who was the one in search of featuring a designer, liked my work. And I'm self-taught. I didn't go to school for it. Even as a child, I would cut my clothes up and bedazzle them. I started really in high school; I would design my prom dresses and then a lot of my girlfriends'. I have some of those here.

EU: So she saw your work and really liked what you were doing?

EH: I think they liked just my style, it's all very natural, natural colors. I'm really into the Earth. I love the outdoors. I'm really inspired by the colors I've found in nature. It helps me to create these dresses or tops. It just kind of comes to me when I'm outside.

EU: How long does it take to create a design like a dress or shirt?

EH: I pretty much have to keep a sketchbook with me at all times, and I'll sketch it out. That takes me about a minute. Then I have to go through the actual thinking of the material that I would use. And what the stretch percentage is and will it work with this idea. And then it goes to the pattern making part. I'll figure out which fabric will work. The dress will change and really evolve from the fabric. It really evolves. It takes me about two weeks to perfect one piece.

EU: How are your designs inspired by nature?

EH: Basically, it's just being out and seeing a lizard and looking at its skin. Or seeing rocks, for example, and the colors, you'll see purple with blue or grey and purple. It's seeing colors together that just naturally occur in nature and in flowers, you may not think go together, like pink and red. Basically color combinations and textiles. I'll just be hangin' out and see a rock and think, 'wow look at that purple and blue together, that is so beautiful. I think I'm going to put a purple and blue silk together.'

EU: How many different designs will you be showing at the fashion show?

EH: 22 pieces

EU: How many boutiques in Jax carry your designs?

EH: Five

EU: Can you describe a particular piece you are fond of or put a lot of thought into?

EH: I'm really into long casual, flowy dresses that you can dress up at night or wear to the beach during the day, in all earth tone colors. My India dress I really like a lot. It's a criss-cross halter, and ties around the neck. And it has a keyhole in the middle. It's A-lined and flowy at the bottom. It's made out of a patchwork Italian silk. The patches look like different animals' skins.

EU: What do you think people will take away from this fashion show, especially first-timers?

EH: I hope that they will develop a bigger and greater appreciation for the fashion industry and be more aware of the Earth and to take care of the earth to preserve our resources.

This is a breakout event for any clothing designer and Erin glows with exuberance at the opportunity to showcase her creations. In October Healy will be opening Apropf Boutique in Jacksonville Beach. She will be at the old library downtown for Art Walk on September 3rd to show her spring line and pre-sell tickets to the fashion show.

"This year's fashion show promises to be another great one," said Maggie Hightower, Up & Cummers President. "The area's hottest boutiques are planning to have their best fall fashions on display and we're very excited to see the models showcase these beautiful products on the runway that evening."

The event will consist of two fashion shows, each lasting 30 minutes, and will feature the newest fall fashions by Jacksonville area boutiques. Complimentary champagne and dessert will be provided to guests following the first show.

A VIP Reception will be open to Up & Cummers members throughout the evening, and will feature complimentary wine, live music and the freshest cuisine provided by local area restaurants.

To purchase event tickets or to join Up & Cummers, visit cummer.org, or call The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens at (904) 356-6857. Proceeds from the event will benefit The Cummer Museum.