

McKinney & Prosper

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THE

Style
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FASHION &
CHARITIES

MEET CHRISTIE,
OUR FANTASTIC
PHOTOGRAPHER

JENNY, THE HAT LADY

Bay Willow Designs
bolero "Sophia"

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BAY WILLOW DESIGN



Bay Willow Designs felt hat "Emma"



Bay Willow Designs straw hat "Ashley"

BAY WILLOW DESIGN

Located on the square in historic downtown McKinney is Bay Willow Design, the specialty shop and studio of Jenny Mathison-Foster, fondly known as "Jenny the Hat Lady," who is a widely sought-after milliner in North Texas.

Jenny's love of hats, though, nudged its way into her life a snippet at a time.

With her degree in art history and design and an emphasis on fibers, Jenny wanted to be a fabric designer. However, after graduating, marrying and moving to Chicago where her husband attended graduate school, she took a job with Crate & Barrel, becoming a store designer working in the stores and then at corporate.

"It was 20-plus years ago that I read an article on hat-making, and it piqued my interest because of what I did...I was working with my hands, and I had a fiber background," Jenny says. "The thing that intrigued me was a picture of old hat blocks, and I thought, 'That's how you make a hat?' I had no idea! I thought, 'How do I learn this?' This was back in the '90s when hats were so out of fashion."

While in Chicago, Jenny explored hat-making. In 2001, Jenny and her husband relocated to McKinney.

"It was desert land for hat classes," she says of McKinney at that time.

She attempted to learn on her own but became quite frustrated. Eventually, she discovered a class at El Centro Community College and enrolled. She had found a community of people who liked hats and wanted to learn how to make them. It wasn't long before Jenny set up a studio in their home.

She continues to find places to learn new techniques beyond the basics and has worked with milliners from both Britain and Australia.

Using various materials, sinamay straw is a popular choice. British milliner Stephen Jones had discovered this material while visiting a flower market in Japan. Originally, it was a material being used to wrap their flower bouquets.

Jenny explains that the fashionable material itself isn't expensive; however, the process of crafting the hat is.

"I use three layers [of sinamay] to give it substance so it will hold its shape, but every edge has to be finished off [wired and covered.] If I put it in my sewing machine, it'll either break my thread or break my needle, so everything about it is hand-sewn. But they do make the prettiest, coolest, most amazing hats."

Jenny crafts hats and headpieces from fedoras to fascinators and everything in between. She can create any look for you: vintage, classic, modern or something to be worn to a royal wedding. Each hat is a handmade work of art.

If you want to complete your look with a hat, stop by Bay Willow Design to see Jenny the Hat Lady for ideas and advice! If you're interested in learning the craft of hat making, Jenny will teach you! Visit BayWillowDesign.com for a calendar of upcoming classes and workshops.



Bay Willow Designs
straw hat "Ashley"

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