

Salem Student Working in One of the Fashion Capitals of the World



Shannon Durkin with a garment she created for a special exhibition last year.



Shannon with her parents, husband, sister-in-law and nephew.

Moving to France has allowed Shannon Durkin to achieve her dreams of becoming a fashion designer. "I've wanted to be a fashion designer since I was young," she said. "My grandma taught me to sew when I was little and my aunt bought me a fashion designer drawing kit. I decided then that I wanted to work in fashion."

Before graduating from Salem in 2004, Durkin enjoyed all of the art classes offered at PCEP which allowed her to try out different mediums and techniques. Her favorite class was Approaching the Arts with Mrs. Thompson where she learned about many different artists that still inspire her today.

"Being able to show my work through all the art classes and building my confidence as an artist is one of the most important things that have helped me on my path since graduation," Durkin said. The high schools continue to offer a variety of different art courses for students of all artistic abilities. Classes range from Painting and Ceramics to more technology based classes like Computer Graphics and Design. There is even a Comic Books and Graphic Novels for those interested. Students who are seriously committed to the arts may also take AP Art or IB Visual Arts.

After graduating, Durkin spent two years at Central Michigan University before transferring to the London College of Fashion, at the University of Arts, London. The fashion industry is a difficult thing to get into, but Durkin managed to make it look easy. "Don't be afraid to explore different subjects and discover what you love before choosing a career path," she advised. "Also try to study abroad or take a gap year, you will meet so many different people and have so many new experiences. It's definitely worth it."

"I think being self-employed in the fashion and costume industries in Paris has been my biggest accomplishment," Durkin said. Being self-employed allows Durkin to choose which projects she wants to work on. Her works range from custom made pieces to photo shoots to costumes for theater and film.

When asked if she would have done anything different, Durkin stated, "I don't think I would have really done anything different. I'm quite happy with the way things went in school and after graduation."