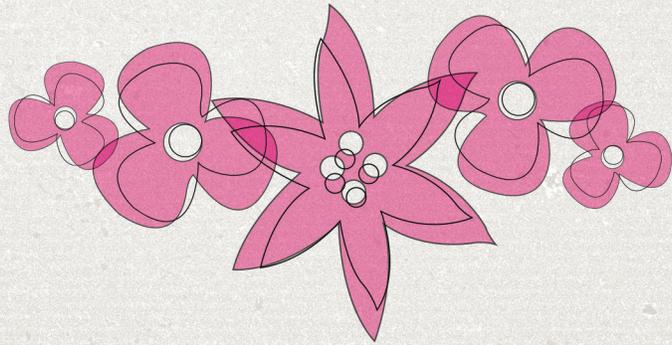


Passion

FOR FASHION



Recent graduate Lillie Parks takes her
business idea on the road

STORY BY DANIELLE PONDER • PHOTOS BY NICKI EVANS

PES alumna Lillie Parks (BBA '10) shares co-ownership of Park Boutique, a mobile fashion boutique, with her sister. Together the pair offer a non-traditional shopping experience for Houston-area trendsetters seeking unique clothing at a reasonable price.



A career in fashion excited Fort Worth native Lillie Parks as she decided on her undergraduate major. But, her mother encouraged her daughter to be more practical and go with a marketing degree, which is exactly what she did. Sort of.

Parks graduated with her marketing degree in 2010 from Bauer College. As part of the college's Program for Excellence in Selling, she used her college experience to realize her fashion dreams as co-owner and operator of Park Boutique, a Houston-based mobile fashion truck.

The other half of the business is owned by her younger sister, Viola Kincade, who transferred to Bauer this fall to complete her accounting degree.

"I firmly believe that what you want to do as a child is what you are meant to do in your adult life," Parks said. "When I started my college education, I was in real estate, and shortly after I began classes I knew I wasn't being fulfilled. Fashion is where I was meant to be. Once I started in PES at Bauer, I excelled and was one of the top students in the program," she said.

Those experiences at Bauer, including participation in the National Collegiate Sales Competition, helped her current endeavors as an entrepreneur and also as a future lawyer.

"I researched and found a degree in fashion law, which I had never heard of," Parks said, "I did some additional research and after a visit to the Fashion Law Institute, I applied and was accepted to South Texas College of Law where I am currently a student. I attend classes part-time so that I can run our business full-time."



Parks wanted to gain experience in the fashion industry while she worked toward her law degree, so she put her business skills to good use and developed Park Boutique.

"Growing up, I always wanted to copy my sister's style since she was really into fashion. We both just naturally gravitated toward this idea of a mobile boutique," Kincade said. "We wanted to offer fun yet affordable clothes that are unique. You won't find our pieces anywhere else you shop."

Parks and her sister explored mobile boutiques in the Los Angeles area, where they purchase many pieces in their collection wholesale. The duo entered into the West Coast Mobile Retail Association's annual funding competition and won a small business loan with zero percent interest.

"Winning the contest with my sister really helped us hit the ground running. The remainder of our

funding comes from what we've saved up from work," Parks said. "This non-traditional route of foregoing a brick-and-mortar store is what's emerging in retail."

Running the boutique alongside her sister comes naturally, Parks said, recalling their mother encouraging a similar partnership when they were children, letting them make and sell hair-bows part-time.

Later in life, she further developed business confidence at Bauer through the PES key accounts team, where student objectives include getting executives to engage in corporate partnerships through on-campus recruiting.

"I had to convince these executives that we lived up to our title as the nation's top sales institute and we could increase their bottom line," Parks said, "It

"Our items are the latest in what celebrities and fashion houses have to offer, but at a much more affordable price," she said, "The most difficult decision we have to make is selecting what pieces to offer because there's only so much we can carry in the truck at any given time. We only buy a few of each piece, and it creates a sense of urgency because if you want it, you need to buy it now or we may not have it the next time you shop."

Those types of marketing strategies underscore the connection of the fashion industry to a business education, Parks said, encouraging students to work hard no matter what career goal they have in mind.

"What I want to tell current students in PES and Bauer is to shoot for being number one," Parks said. "Always try hard



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took a lot of research to know who we were selling to. Now I use those same experiences to talk to retail locations we might want to partner with."

She currently works closely with Forever 21's downtown location and some Houston-based businesses, including Taxi Taxi and the Cut Loose Salon in the Montrose area.

Because space is limited in the confines of a truck, Parks must be selective when it comes to inventory, while considering the range of styles of Park Boutique clientele, which include college-age students who want to emulate the latest celebrity trends, as well as business professional women searching for pieces to add a little something extra to a work ensemble. This spring, hot sellers were items you might find at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, with lots of florals and bohemian styles, Parks said.

to give your best and strive for excellence in everything you do. You're at the best business college the nation has to offer, so your opportunities are truly endless."

A pink rectangular graphic featuring three white floral icons at the top. Below the icons, the text reads: "FIND THE LATEST ON PARK BOUTIQUE BY FOLLOWING @PARKBOUTIQUE ON TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM".