



Everyone Deserves a Second Chance

How your United Way dollars are changing lives

Tisa Ofield-Reynolds looks around her store and sees herself. Tisa's talent is evident from the array of clothing and accessories that adorn the space. What isn't so evident is Tisa's feeling that her designs are metaphors for how her life was reconstructed.

Tisa owns RAGZ, a unique retail store in the Crown Center Shops that sells apparel and accessories created from recycled items - everything from full-length dresses made from pieces of denim to earrings made from buttons and zippers. "I like to think of things in a different way," Tisa says. "I see the beauty and try to see something different."

She credits a lot of her success as an artist and businesswoman to those who saw her potential when she was young. "It's amazing to me that I am a business owner near where I grew up," Tisa says.

Tisa grew up in a home headed by her single-mother in the inner city near 24th and Olive. At 17, she became pregnant. It was at a time when the school system operated under different rules. "We couldn't go to regular school," Tisa says. So she was enrolled in a work study program at DeLaSalle Education Center, a United Way partner agency.

"I really liked the individual attention to the students," Tisa says. "The teachers seemed interested in the students."

She especially appreciated Pat Lantz, a graphic arts teacher. "He challenged me to see beyond 35th Street," she says. "He would not allow me to stay there. In a way he challenged me to see past what was going on. He pushed me so much. He saw I loved to be creative. I've been creative ever since."

After DeLaSalle, Tisa became a fashion designer, participated in the Kauffman Foundation's entrepreneurial program and started her home-based business. She divorced the father of her oldest daughter. She has since re-married and had two more daughters.

Tisa sold her items through Stuff, a Kansas City retailer, for eight years before opening her store in 2009. "I have had to work hard but I believe opportunities do present themselves," she says.

And she sees young people who might have made wrong choices still have plenty of potential, like the creations she makes from recycled materials. "I can relate to it. Unfortunately, things can happen in a youth's life," she says. "But our youth are really perfectly good youth."

Thanks to generous donors and volunteers, United Way of Greater Kansas City is helping many youth like Tisa attain their dreams. In fact, education is one of United Way's three community impact areas. Together, we are creating opportunities for everyone in our community to reach their full potential.

Tisa Ofield-Reynolds credits a lot of her success as an artist and businesswoman to those who recognized her creativity and potential as a youth. “I’ve been creative ever since,” she says.



Tisa Ofield-Reynolds sold her work for eight years before opening her own store, RAGZ, in Crown Center in 2009.

Tisa’s store isn’t far from the neighborhood where she grew up – a fact that amazes her.

Tisa Ofield-Reynolds’ store, RAGZ, sells apparel and accessories made from recycled items, including full-length dresses made from pieces of denim and earrings made from buttons.

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