

sted in RP Motel 6 shooting



Founder of Threads for Teens (TFT) Allyson Ahlstrom showcases one of the TFT Boutiques established by her organization. The boutiques are by appointment only, and have proven, through Allyson's tireless efforts, to be a big hit and a wonderful gift with thousands of young girls all over the country. As a University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School of Business student Allyson doesn't normally spend her time in the store, but when she is home on summer vacation, the Santa Rosa store is where she goes to work.

Photo by Robert Grant

Threads for Teens: affordable clothes for low-income girls

By Molly Lynch

What started five years ago for 14 year old Allyson Ahlstrom as a one time clothes donation drive, has since become the local non-profit, volunteer-run business Threads for Teens. In those short five years, Allyson, now 20, is making amazing and inspiring things happen. Not only is she doing so locally, but she's also planting the seeds across the U.S. and beyond. One of the first things Allyson said when we sat down to chat was, "I would never in a million years have thought that first idea to create a clothes donation drive would land me where I am now."

With an all-volunteer fueled organization,

the Threads for Teens store in Santa Rosa outfits underprivileged girls 13-18. And currently with another five satellite stores opening across the U.S. and one in London this fall, I too can imagine that at age 14, it might have been difficult to see this current growth and expansion around the globe! But, as I heard more of Allyson's story and her inspired vision, I realized even though she couldn't have imagined this all happening, I certainly could see why she and Threads for Teens has had such amazing success and continues to inspire her community and girls around the nation.

I asked Allyson how she got started on her entrepreneurial path "I was a freshman at Ur-

suline High School and they have something called a senior service project. Even though I was not a senior, my parents kept encouraging me to do one now. I said, I can't I'm not a senior yet! But then, my parents gave me a book for Christmas that year called Generation Change by Zach Hunter, which was about different service projects kids were doing around the country. I read one story about a 12-year-old kid who was raising awareness about human trafficking, and I was like, I'm two years behind the game, I have to do something now.

That very night began to get everything together for the clothing donation."

'TFT' see page 14

For that first clothing drive, Allyson received clothing donations from Tommy Hilfiger and GoJane.com, which outfitted 13 girls who received two outfits each. Since then, 2,700 girls across the country have received new outfits. Initially she opened her first store in Windsor, but since October moved to their new location in West Santa Rosa. The store runs by appointment only by applying at their website online. The appointments are generally set up for the girls through their social workers, foster parents, or school counselors who represent them and feel they might be a perfect fit for this program. Allyson says the representative also comes to the appointment in support of the girls. Their goal is always to have 30 appointments a month at the shop, and for the flexibility around school schedules, they do a lot of weekend appointments.

"The way the outfitting works is that girls come to the shop and have a one on one consultation with us, and then we spend time together outfitting them with clothes that make them feel beautiful, dignified, and good about themselves. My whole vision now with Threads for Teens is about girl empowerment. Sometimes that comes from the outside in, and self-esteem is built at times by looking in the mirror, wearing something beautiful that you feel good in and there's that boost that happens. And all of our clothes are donated, new, and we have all styles and sizes," says Ahlstrom.

Threads for Teens also takes the show on the road! Sponsored by Keds and Rue 21 and beginning this August, their second annual mobile boutique will be touring the U.S., stopping in Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Phoenix, El Paso, Nashville and New York. The 18-wheeler pink mobile boutique is something that can't be missed when rolling into town!

On this tour alone, they will outfit a total of 1,000 girls. This year's tour will be a little different too. Allyson shared that because of her growing message of her organization is girl empowerment, the girls that will be recipients of outfits on the tour will have the opportunity to participate in mini-summits, goal setting groups, "Dress for Success" talks, and create vision boards.

"The tour is definitely expanding into the vision I have to help these girls build their confidence, self-esteem and to feel good about who they are. My wish is to also give them a sense of inspiration and purpose to create changes, not only personally, but maybe even in the lives of others. I did hear some stories along the last tour that really moved me about some of the girls making those empowered changes in their lives out of the simple act of the Threads for Teens tour coming to town. I feel there aren't enough girl empowerment organizations out there, and Threads for Teens wants to be a part of making that happen on a larger scale. The tour is a definite way to do that," says Ahlstrom.

Having built her business at such a young age, I wanted to know more about Allyson's support system over these last five years, and the people who have inspired her along the way, "Actually, my mom and my whole family are my biggest support and inspiration. My

mom and dad have always encouraged me. For instance, my mom sets up all the appointments for the tour, my dad is doing all the work making our 5K fundraiser on August 29 at Cardinal Newman happen. My grandfather drives the pink mobile truck for the tour, and my sister does all the social media like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube videos that are on the website. I have amazing friends as well who are so supportive. And we have such a great group of volunteers, who we always welcome more of! One of my favorite mottoes is "If everyone does a little, no one has to do a lot."

She also welcomes new volunteers expressing that even four hours a month of volunteering for these kinds of organizations is huge.

Ahlstrom also received national recognition as a 2014 recipient of the annual Roslyn S. Jaffe Awards granted to women who are everyday heroes. The Honorable Mention Award of \$5,000 provided a 2015 prom dress experience in Santa Rosa, CA, to 100 girls from low-income communities. They have also used some of the award monies to help with the mobile tour this summer.

Some of Allyson's empowered women inspirations are Tyra Banks, writer and director, Bryce Dallas Howard who is also the high heel wearing woman in the movie Jurassic Park, and the Victoria's Secret model and actress Rosie Huntington-Whiteley. All these women change makers in fashion and creating entrepreneurial empires, and who Allyson has had the pleasure of meeting and even working with at times.

She also devours books and mentioned having read a few just in the prior week about strong, powerful women who have been successful and inspire her to continue to forge ahead with empowering young girls and women in the ways that she is with Threads for Teens. She most of all believes in learning from such powerful women who have paved the way.

And Allyson doesn't stop learning from books alone, she shares, "I actually have a list of 33 women I'm going to cold call today from the Forbes Top 100 most Powerful Women list! So, yes I take the initiative and reach out often to find out if I can have a phone call or meeting with these women. And I have an appointment next week in New York with Gretchen Carlson, the Fox News commentator and author of the book "Getting Real". Her story is really amazing and I wanted to meet her so I just called and asked. And of course I want to talk to or meet Oprah, that's my big dream!"

You can find out more about Threads for Teens by checking out all that's happening on their website <http://threadsforteens.org/> Or, if you, or someone you know of that might be interested in volunteering for Threads for Teens you may also call or email at the contact page through the site.

To register for the Threads for Teens 5K race fundraiser on August 29 at Cardinal Newman High School, please go to <https://www.racentry.com/race-reviews/threads-for-teens-5k> Included in the cost for registration will be a breakfast following the race, tee shirt and water and it will be a fun day! Threads for Teens also has a Back to School drive, and they are always accepting donations of formal dresses for their annual prom dress distribution.

"Minions"



Movie reviews
By Don Gibble

Kevin, the leader of the gang; overeager Bob and one-eyed Stuart, who didn't exactly volunteer for the job but is taken along on Kevin's expedition anyway. All three characters are voiced by Coffin, who co-directed the first two films as well. As narrator Geoffrey Rush explains during the film's busy opening sequence, minions have been around for much longer than man, eagerly serving baddies wherever they can find them. Past masters include a T. rex, an evil pharaoh, Dracula, whose 357th birthday celebration, thrown by the minions, comes to a predictably disastrous end when they throw open the curtains during the day, and



Movie reviews is a feature in The Community Voice. Movies will be rated as 1 being the worst and 5 being the best.



The dungarees and goggles