

Getting Creative in the Big Apple

Ziyan Ding wasted no time pursuing her dream of becoming a designer. She went straight from the Board of Child Care to the Big Apple to study at the prestigious Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York City. She recently completed her associate's degree in advertising, marketing and communications, and is now pursuing a second associate's degree in fashion design from FIT.

Ziyan explains that she isn't out to become the next Chanel. In fact, she is open to all types of design, whether it be fashion design, interior design or designing toys, packaging, or other commonly used products. She just wants a creative outlet.

"I don't want to limit myself," Ziyan explains. "I would be happy just working with my hands and making things that make other people happy."

Even though Ziyan no longer lives at BCC, the agency continues to help support her educational goals and helped her find an apartment in Maryland while she was on her summer break. She frequently stopped into the Baltimore campus to say hello to staff and report on her progress in school.

Ziyan came to live at BCC's Baltimore campus at age 15. Living in a group home setting was new to her, but she decided to make the most of her situation. She quickly moved up through BCC's system of independence levels, earning a spot in the



Semi-Independent Living Program and the Nicodemus Group Home. At the same time she obtained her high school diploma from Franklin High School in three years.

Initially she wanted to pursue a career in business, but her love of clothes and creative projects was too strong to ignore. Even though Ziyan had no design experience going into FIT, she has quickly made up for lost time through hours of class time spent sketching fashion designs and learning how to sew and select fabrics. Now she wants to begin working on creating her own signature style.

"Once I get into it, I will loosen up and develop different forms and mediums," She says.

Despite her busy new life as a fashion design student, Ziyan isn't too busy

to credit BCC staff for encouraging her to pursue her creative passions and apply to design schools. She urges other kids in care at BCC to pursue their dreams with BCC's help as well.

"A lot of kids don't recognize what great of a resource BCC can be. They don't realize all the resources foster

care can give them," Ziyan says. "BCC essentially says, 'If you do well, we will support you.' Not even every parent has the ability to do this. This is awesome that [BCC] does this for us."



Ziyan Ding has spent hours sketching fashion designs as a student at the Fashion Institute of Technology.