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Bethany Thouin, a chocolatier in Franklin, and her daughter Jessie Lyric Harrell, 10, a budding fashion designer, work on a dress made of chocolate for an upcoming runway show in New York City. They attach the pieces with earring backings.

# Budding fashion designer gets chance at N.Y. runway

Chocolatier, daughter headed to Big Apple with very sweet dress

By RACHEL STULTS  
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**FRANKLIN** — Inside her Franklin home, Bethany Thouin and her daughter are beginning their voyage into the world of high fashion.

Side by side they sit, constructing a dress they hope will move down a New York City runway with elegance and glamour fit only for the most particular fashionistas.

They lay their dark and light panels down in a grid-like form, aiming for a 1920s



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Jessie Lyric and her mother work on a dress made of chocolate.

flapper-style dress that will move as their model walks.

Their efforts smell sweet; an overwhelming aroma fills the kitchen, reminding them of the hours it will take to

make hundreds of pieces of chocolate and turn them into a dress that can be worn on Nov. 8.

Thouin and her daughter, Jessie Lyric Harrell, 10, will

travel to New York in two weeks with the dress in tow for a runway show in which she and her daughter will debut their high-fashion chocolate dress.

Thouin is one of 22 chocolatiers who was chosen from across the world — and the only one from the South, she says — to create a dress made out of chocolate, put it on a model and have it go down a New York runway. The fashion event will kick off the 10th annual Chocolate Show, which brings together exhibitors, chef demonstrations and chocolate fashion for one week every year.

"I was thinking to myself, 'I can do that — why couldn't I do that? I want to do that,'" said Thouin, who

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## Dress: Mother saw no reason she couldn't pull it off

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has attended the event with her daughter in past years.

Thouin, the original owner of The Cocoa Tree in Franklin, is now starting her own chocolate line. Bethany:Chocolatier.

### Girl has own line

Jessie Lyric, a fifth-grader at Walnut Grove Elementary, has grown up sketching clothing designs, and has even created her own line, called Sunnyside Up. So when Thouin was chosen to participate in the show and was offered the chance to work with a professional designer, she quickly came up with another solution: her budding designer daughter could create the design instead.

Jessie Lyric wanted something with swinging fringe — something unusual and glamorous — something that

### Online

For more information on the chocolate event, visit [www.chocolateshow.com](http://www.chocolateshow.com).

defined her style.

"I'm probably going to be the youngest fashion designer there and I'm really grateful for this," Jessie Lyric said. "I hope that more people will see my talent and I'll be in the lights on the red carpet someday."

The duo worked on the sketch together and had a professional redraw it. The design they've created takes dark and milk chocolate panels, with "pops" of white chocolate, and lays them over one another. To prevent melting on the model, the room will be very cold and the dressmaker is allowed to construct the dress using a piece of fabric underneath as a barrier between body heat and the creamy

candy, Thouin said.

Thouin and her daughter will awake at 6 a.m. for the next two weeks to pin 690 panels of chocolate to the dress using earring backings.

Not that it bothers Jessie Lyric much.

"It's worth it," she said. "It's New York. Hello!"

In true flapper theme, the mother-daughter pair will also construct a feather headband, with the feather made out of chocolate, and a fake cigar, made out of a cinnamon stick with a chocolate-dipped tip.

"You can make almost anything out of chocolate — it's amazing," Thouin said. "But you have to think about what a designer wants to see and think, 'How do I translate that to chocolate and make it work?'"

### Reassembly required

Thouin will disassemble the dress before departing for New York, and reassemble it

once she's there. Thouin will make several hundred more panels of chocolate in case of emergencies. Even though she has developed an elaborate plan to encase her dress safely for the trip, the chocolate could crack, melt, break or fall off, and she wants to be prepared for any scenario.

It's a lot of work for an edible dress that may fall apart as soon as it's taken off the model. And Jessie Lyric and her siblings must resist the temptation to eat their work. But, Thouin and her daughter say the chance to work together on a project and show off their masterpiece on a runway in New York makes it worth the effort.

"You want your little girl to believe she can do anything and it gives me the opportunity to show myself — that little girl inside of me — what's possible," Thouin said.

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