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DESIGNERS
WHO DO IT ALL

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WELL-BALANCED THREADS
Lorin Webb started Wanderite while in school. The project, an eco-friendly clothing line featuring her hand-drawn illustrations on garments, has since continued to flourish as a business venture for the young designer.



DESIGNING CHANGE

PLANTING THE SEED

There's something in the water down in Starkville, MS. We've been noticing phenomenal student work streaming in from the Deep South for a while. First, we were floored by the portfolios that graphic design students were churning out as part of their coursework at Mississippi State University College of Architecture, Art & Design. Then, we were hooked by a breadth of projects from students and recent alum alike that address social awareness. A movement was happening in the Golden Triangle region of the state, and it became clear that a common thread linked this body of work: the often unseen educators who work tirelessly to ignite enthusiasm within their design students.

Jamie Mixon, interim head of the department of art at MSU|CAAD, caught our attention five years ago when her logo design for bakery Peace, Love & Desserts took home the readers' choice honor in our Logo Design Awards. Now, we're noticing that a string of enticing projects all lead back to the classrooms at MSU. Although creating projects related to social awareness isn't necessarily a formal part of the curriculum, Mixon notes that it all ties into instilling pas-

sion. "The key is to get [students] to care," she says, explaining that pinpointing a subject and challenging a student to support it with excellent design is just the ticket. "This ability to empathize translates into passionate and meaningful work. At some point in that student's design education, when she finally gets to work on a social cause or project that they truly believe in, they're raring to go. They find that they're equipped with the visual communication skills, work ethic and drive to make it actually happen."

Lorin Webb started her own company, Wanderite, during her thesis semester last year in Mixon's classroom. "Wanderite is an eco-friendly, sweatshop-free screen-printing design studio that features my hand-drawn illustrations on responsibly made apparel using water-based inks and solvents," Webb says. Her venture is now operating out of the business incubator studio space subsidized by the Entrepreneurship Center at MSU. On top of that, Webb is now teaching others on campus about how to start their own design businesses. "I've always known that I'd do my own thing as a designer and illustrator, so I made the



decision from the beginning that I'd do it in the most responsible, sustainable, eco-conscious way possible," she says.

Taylor Gair, another MSU grad, has helped brand several clean initiatives, such as the Southern Energy Network Cleanin' Up the Dirty South Campaign, WeVow | Waste Veggie Oil Wagon and the MSU Green Fund campaign. "He's a force to be reckoned with," Mixon says of Gair. "Most design students work on prototypes and theory; Taylor made concrete changes in policy and helped organize students who were interested in the environment."

In talking about these projects initiated by her young crop of grads, Mixon notes that "students are a teacher's legacy ... and when they change the world around them for the better, [it's] even sweeter." **HOW**

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PROACTIVE PROJECTS

Above: The Suite Nest branding and packaging was completed by MSU alumna Alaina Anglin. The sale of each handmade birdhouse benefits the Audubon Society. Left: MSU grad Taylor Gair has created design elements to support several clean energy initiatives. "The most important thing design has to offer to any social movement is the ability to quickly and effectively inform people," Gair says.