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## Daughters have designs on a special gift for Mom

Students win contest to have their jewelry made by pros

By DIANE M. REY, For The Capital

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Instead of flowers or candy, Mackenzie Clayton managed to give her mom a one-of-a-kind ruby and diamond bracelet with interlocking hearts for Mother's Day. And she didn't have to dip into her allowance money for this year's gift.

The 11-year-old Jones Elementary student was one of four winners in a Mother's Day jewelry design contest sponsored by Zachary's Jewelers. The winners got to see their designs transformed into fine jewelry pieces and presented to their mothers.

The contest at the company's Severna Park location was open to fifth-grade students in Severna Park and surrounding areas. More than 300 entries poured in. Entrants and their families were invited to a brunch last week where the winning designers were revealed.

"It was such a surprise," said Mackenzie's mother, Anne Clayton of Severna Park, who has collected compliments on her bracelet on Facebook. "It's something I'll always remember."

Zachary's owner Steve Samaras called the promotion "one of the most successful and I think appreciated events we've ever staged."

Store manager Daphne Foreman said the staff was bowled over by the response.

"We were shocked and thrilled at the level of participation. It snowballed," she said.

Organizers plan to make the contest an annual event.

Professional jewelry designer Erica Christian, who helped create the winning pieces, said students had so many good ideas it was hard to pick winners.

"Some of their design aesthetics were along the lines of professionals," she said.

Staff narrowed the field to 100 finalists from 15 participating schools before selecting four grand-prize winners. Runners-up received prizes from local businesses.

In creating each custom-designed piece, lead jeweler Bill Ramsey tried to stick as closely as possible to students' sketches.

"It's usually the simplest designs that are the prettiest," Ramsey told the girls as he showed them the cutting and polishing tools he uses in his work. He urged them to keep taking art classes in school if they want to become pros. "You've got to be original to get your foot in the door."

Winner Sophie Oliver, 11, who attends Arnold Elementary, designed a necklace with a silver teardrop pendant set with a sapphire flanked by small pearls. Sophie said she was inspired by the 18-carat sapphire in Princess Kate Middleton's engagement ring.

Sophie's mother, Adele, who was born in England, loved the contemporary design.

"I haven't taken it off," she said.

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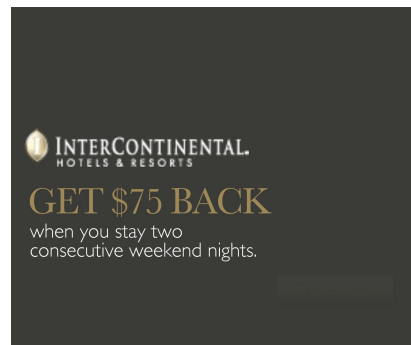
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**Aug 14** - Big MD Marketplace ~ Bargain Shopping

**Jul 22** - Roald Dahl's Willy Wonka

**Jul 30** - Local author book signing at Borders

**Aug 04** - Hairspray



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"She knows I love pearls," said Leigh Anna Geraghty of Annapolis, as she clutched the pearl and diamond choker designed by her 10-year-old daughter, Emma, a St. Mary's student. The 14 various-sized pearls on five thin silver strands appeared to be floating in air.

"I can wear it casual or dressy. It goes so well with anything," said the proud mom. Emma also designed matching earrings.

Organizers originally planned to select just three winners, before they saw 10-year-old Bryanne Adams' design and heard the poignant story behind it.

The student at Sunset Elementary School in Pasadena sketched a pair of silver drop earrings for her mother, Kim Adams.

SHARE IDEAS

Each earring features a filigree heart with a circle of silver beneath. One was set with a diamond birthstone, stamped with the date 1965, the year Bryanne's father, Bryan, was born. The other was set with an amethyst and stamped 2011, marking the date of her dad's death in February.

"When I saw the picture, I just started crying," Kim said. "She was a daddy's girl. I know he'd be very proud."

Diane Rey is a freelance writer based in Annapolis.

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