

# Stories Beneath the Shell



## FEATURES

# UMD student's company fights waste, one piece of clothing at a time

*by Natalie Davis*

*This article was updated on Dec. 1 at 1:42 PM.*

Self-taught seamstress Samantha Ward started putting new life into old clothes by using bits of fabric to create trendy pieces that mirror styles popular online.

The junior marketing and public relations major wasn't planning to turn that hobby into a business until she was asked to be a part of the designer marketplace for the University of Maryland's NextNow Fest. That spawned her company, Barely Original.

"Every time I would make something new I would be absolutely blown away that I could do that," Ward said.

Soon, she started sharing the clothes on her **Instagram account** (<https://www.instagram.com/barelyoriginals/>). Then she tabled at the NextNow Fest. It was a huge success for her company — she sold seven handsewn items for \$40-55 each, Ward said.

Instead of reusing the clothing, clothing often ends up in the landfill. Ward wanted to make a dent through Barely Original, since all her clothing is made from reused materials.

"By altering the clothes that I have to make them into something I would actually wear I would have a lesser footprint on the environment," Ward said.

Ward would find designs on the internet that she liked and recreate them using her old clothes. Occasionally, she would go to thrift stores and use second hand items to make clothing for people of different sizes than herself, she said.

"The pandemic sort of offered me the opportunity to take on a new hobby and this was also around the time I was really starting to educate myself about how the fashion industry negatively impacts the environment," Ward said.

When Hannah Badro, a junior public health sciences major, first tried on one of Ward's dresses she immediately felt like it was meant for her.

"Not only are her pieces amazingly designed, but the message behind her work is so inspirational," Badro said.

Kristen Villaverde, a junior finance major, said she gets compliments on Ward's clothing.

"I love the originality of Sam's pieces and how each article of clothing showcases her personality," Villaverde said.

The NextNow Fest did win some customers and a financial baseline for Ward, but she said she's still figuring out ways to better advertise and market her clothes.

"It's really hard to market and advertise because I don't really have the resources to do so," Ward said. "I think creating a more consistent posting and sewing schedule would be beneficial to me, but that's just something I haven't done yet because of school."

Still, Ward has high hopes for the future of her business and is consistently working on improving her skills.

"I've been sewing for a year and a half," Ward said, "but my business was born this summer. It's been a short period of time so I am looking forward to spending more time with it and seeing where it takes me."

*Featured image: A collage of various upcycled clothes Ward made. Photo courtesy of Samantha Ward.*



**JOEL LEV-TOVDECEMBER 1, 2021DECEMBER 1, 2021# CLOTHING, # COLLEGE PARK, # STORIES BENEATH THE SHELL, # SUSTAINABILITY, # UMD, # UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, # WASTE**

...

**Website Powered by WordPress.com.**