


Argus Leader

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LIFE FRIDAY

STYLE

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a purple off-the-shoulder dress and black high-heeled sandals, is smiling and holding a long, fringed, metallic-looking bag. She is standing in a room with three guitars hanging on the wall behind her. The room has a checkered patterned chair and a dark table to the left.

MISS South Dakota GOING GREEN

At the national pageant, Morgan Peck will be wearing dresses made of recycled materials **2D**

It's In
the Bag

Check out purses
at local benefit **4D**

Miss South Dakota will be eco-chic for national pageant

STORY BY **JANNA FARLEY**
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IF YOU WATCH

WHAT: 2010 Miss America Pageant
WHEN: 7 p.m.
Jan. 30
CHANNEL: TLC

Morgan Peck poses for photographer Christopher Reistroffer during a photo shoot.



Designer Anita Kealey makes green dresses

For some, environmentally-friendly fashion has yet to completely shake off its hippie hemp roots.

If you fall into that category, get ready to be shaken.

Going green no longer means wearing something akin to a burlap sack, thanks to improvements in the design of organic cotton, rapidly sustainable bamboo and other environmentally-friendly fabrics.

But Sioux Falls designer Anita Kealey, owner of Evenings by Design, is working with a fabric made from a surprising source: cassette tapes.

That's right. Cassette tapes – those antiquated data recorders and mix-tape mainstays. Since the advent of CDs and digital music, they've been practically obsolete.

But woven with cotton, the tape from cassettes is taking on a new, beautiful life.

The media fabric, as it's been dubbed, is woven in Rhode Island and isn't available for commercial sale anywhere yet. Kealey got it from a friend who's been experimenting with its design and had been using it to make sails for boats.

"When she sent me some, I thought, 'Oh, my gosh – I want to make clothes with it.'"

The fabric is really durable, so it's not as easy to sew as cloth made from other fibers.

"It's a little challenging in that it's more like upholstery fabric than fabric traditionally used to make dresses," Kealey says. "It's not quite as pliable."

But it is possible, as evidenced by the dresses Kealey has created for Miss South Dakota Mor-

gan Peck to wear during the Miss America competition next week.

Kealey created a handful of dresses using the media fabric, bamboo and sustainable silk. The first, a short blue dress, also includes reclaimed fabric from a men's Armani suit.

"I like to take things that might have ended up in the garbage and give them new life," Kealey says. "It's something I've done my whole life. It's just good common sense."

Peck will wear this dress for the Miss America runway show early next week.

For the interview portion of the competition, Peck will wear a short eggplant-colored dress with ¾-length sleeves.

"In the old days, girls wore suits for the interviews, but they always looked kind of frumpy," Kealey says.

This dress is sophisticated, yet comfortable and age-appropriate. "It'll get you noticed in the interview, and then they'll find out what you're all about," Kealey tells Peck.

But the real star of the show will be the evening gown, which Kealey had to finish sewing before Peck left for the competition earlier this week.

The floor-length gown, made of the same eggplant-colored media fabric, sustainable silk and bamboo as the interview dress, features a lot of detailed ruching and pleating. "Most people have a certain idea of what something is going to look like when it's green or organic," Kealey says. "They're not expecting it to be like this."

That's what Peck loves about the dresses Kealey has created.

"Obviously, I'm a big fan of how they look. They're current. They're hip. They're cutting edge," she says. "I think people are going to be really jealous."

ABOUT MISS S.D.

NAME:

Morgan Peck

AGE:

20

HOMETOWN:

Sioux Falls

PARENTS: Matt Peck and Connie Bowar

SCHOOL: University of South Dakota

MAJOR: Political science and economics

CAREER AMBITION: To practice law and to run for public office





COVER ILLUSTRATION BY ANGELA PARR / PHOTOS BY LLOYD B. CUNNINGHAM / ARGUS LEADER

Sioux Falls designer Anita Kealey helps 2009 Miss South Dakota, Morgan Peck, with finishing touches on her outfit during a photo shoot with local photographer Christopher Reistroffer. The dress Peck is wearing was designed and handmade by Kealey. **ON THE COVER:** Miss South Dakota Morgan Peck.

But Peck loves the story behind the dresses even more.

"We have this impression of recycled things and how they look, and there's certainly an area of the market that's interested in that kind of thing," she says. "You look at something like this and you realize that there's a lot more possibilities with environmentally-friendly items than you'd ever thought before."

Coincidentally, the national Miss America Organization has recently embarked on a go green campaign, says Kristi Richter, executive director of the Miss South Dakota pageant. "So this just falls right in line with the

message they're trying to send on a national level," Richter says.

That could be an advantage for Peck during next week's competition. "It says more that Morgan is living this instead of just stepping into the role and participating," Richter says. "She's living the lifestyle. It's a good thing. I love that Morgan is going to be on the cutting edge of Miss America, wearing green fabric."

Peck's determined to tell the story of her dresses, too. "I know there will be a way to work that into the conversation," she says.

But beyond the competition, wearing environmentally-friendly clothing is a way for Peck to set a

positive example for other young women in the state.

"Girls that compete are role models, and Miss South Dakota touches a lot of people," Richter says. "This is just another way to send the message that there's always another way to be creative and unique in our efforts to go green."

And, more importantly, it shows that eco-friendly can be eco-chic.

"You don't have to wear a burlap bag to be green," Kealey says. "You can still have femininity and be environmentally conscious and still have style."

Reach Janna Farley at 575-3628.