

# Teaching children, adults to sew is Paula Hardin's joy

By Beth Donze

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For 48 years, Paula Hardin has based her livelihood on her twin passions for sewing and teaching the craft to local seamstresses of all ages and abilities.

This summer, children ages 8 and older can avail themselves of Hardin's "Learn to Sew" classes, held at Hobby Lobby locations in Harahan, Harvey, Covington and Slidell.

"They learn how to use a sewing machine – whether it's their own or one of ours; they learn how to cut out a pattern; they learn how to complete one or more garments," said

Hardin, noting that beginners can build their skills over the course of however many 10-hour sessions they choose.

"As they get more advanced and take more of the same course, they have many choices about what their next project will be, always with the understanding that we're trying to teach them all about sewing. In other words, zippers and sleeves and buttonholes and collars," she said.

"When they come to us as beginners they do a tote bag and then a patterned project of either pants, shorts or a skirt," added Hardin. "Returning students work on more advanced projects such as dresses, shirts,

skirts with zippers. Some like to do craft projects like stuffed animals, pillows, dresses, kimono style jackets – the whole gamut."

Hardin, a native of Kentucky, said she became "fascinated" with sewing at age 10, when a friend's seamstress mother took the children under her wing. While Hardin's own mother also helped her with her fledgling skills, Hardin says she is mostly self-taught. She honed her sewing and teaching chops in college as a home economics major, paired with a background in education.

At the beginning of her career, Hardin taught in the New Orleans public school system, but left after just one year to teach private sewing lessons in fabric stores such as JoAnn Fabrics and Hancock Fabrics.

"I have had as many as 10 stores under my belt, but I also have a number of teach-

ers who teach with me and for me," Hardin said, noting that each Hobby Lobby location has its own sewing classroom equipped with sewing machines, irons, ironing boards, scissors, and, of course, a full store of supplies.

"We are able to access the fabric, the patterns and the notions without having to send parents out to another store to buy stuff," said Hardin, who often sees students she taught as pre-teens resurface in her sewing classes in their 30s. She also is now teaching the children of former students.

"They think (sewing) is magical," Hardin said. "It's just astounding to them when they can take a piece of fabric that looks like nothing and make it into something that they can wear or use as a gift. They just think it's fun, they have a great time and they come back over and over again!"

Each 10-hour sewing session

costs \$90 and is taught over the course of several days. By the end of March, a full schedule of classes at each location will be posted on Hardin's website and at the Hobby Lobby stores. Morning and afternoon sessions are available.

"We often have adults who take the children's classes because the time is good, or they want to do the 'Mommy and Me' thing," said Hardin, who also teaches Hobby Lobby-based sewing classes for adults, serger classes, and classes in quilting, window decorating and gifts.

"A lot of people don't come to me until they're retired – they find out it's a good hobby in retirement," Hardin said. "It's never too late to learn how to sew!"

For more information and to view samples of student work, visit [paulasewingschool.com](http://paulasewingschool.com). Call 884-9627, or email [paulahardin@live.com](mailto:paulahardin@live.com).

