

Thriving on the balancing act

Jillian Macey ('04) turns a hobby into two thriving businesses

BY HALI CHIET ('07)

What started as a hobby has become a dream job for **Jillian Macey ('04)**, founder and owner of two businesses – Très Chic Designs and Weddings & Wellies.

Established in 2005, Très Chic Designs specializes in personalized stationery, while Macey's new venture, Weddings & Wellies, is an all-encompassing wedding design studio offering everything from letterpress save-the-dates and invitations to programs, place cards and late-night goodie bags.

"I absolutely love what I do because I get to work one-on-one with clients and really establish a connection with each of them," says Macey, a communications studies, and media arts and design double major. She started her first business while she was in graduate school – creating monogrammed stationery, party and wedding invitations for friends and classmates. "My friends loved my work and encouraged me to start my own business," she says. "Marketing was by word of mouth at first, and then I decided to create a website."

The company name, Très Chic Designs, came from Macey's friend **Lizzie Jenkins ('04)**, who referred to stylish things as being "très chic."

Macey earned a graduate degree in college student affairs administration from the University of Georgia, intending to work in a leadership development role. But her business took off, and she quickly realized her passion and enjoyment in being creative. "I absolutely fell in love with designing stationery, so I moved to New York to pursue it."

When she arrived in New York in 2006, Macey exhibited in the National Stationery Show. "I soon realized that New York was an expensive place to live, and I wasn't quite ready to work from home," she recalls. She continued expanding her business but also took a job at Kate Spade New York, quickly moving her way up from Spade's personal assistant to the merchandising manager for handbags and apparel. Macey worked with the design, product development and sales teams to meet customers' needs,

set retail prices and finalize product designs.

"I loved being able to combine both the business and creative sides," says Macey, who was always interested in fashion but never considered a career in the field.

During her four years with Kate Spade, Macey kept designing wedding invitations on the side. She designed for several JMU alumnae friends. Macey says her Madison Experience helped prepare her for the challenging, yet exciting balancing act.

At JMU, Macey took on various leadership roles as a Student Ambassador, student director for Greek Week and as an Orientation program assistant. She also chaired student committees for Homecoming and Commons Day. The Sigma Kappa and Lambda Pi Eta member says, "My JMU experience – what I learned in my classes and my involvement in all of these activities – helped me learn how to successfully balance everything."

After four years in New York and success with her first business, Macey decided she was ready to focus all of her attention on weddings and start the next stage of her life with her fiancé. "We were both ready to leave New York and start a life together in a place that better matched our lifestyle," she says.

Macey lives in Norwich, Vt., and enjoys the luxury of working from her cozy country home. But she hasn't given up the balancing act. In addition to managing Weddings and Wellies, she also teaches online classes in the School of Fashion for the Academy of Art University in San Francisco.

She is also involved with the partner board and Women in Business Board at Tuck School of Business, where her fiancé is completing his M.B.A. Macey enjoys free time running with their golden retriever puppy on local trails.

"I absolutely love running my own business and doing something creative every day," Macey adds. "I constantly challenge myself to design new and exciting things, and I look forward to the future of pleasing clients with Weddings & Wellies." ❧

*** Learn more about Jillian Macey ('04) at www.weddingsandwellies.com and www.treschicdesigns.com.**



Wondering why she's wearing those yellow boots? "They're called wellies, and they're cheery like weddings," says Jillian Macey ('04). "That's how I came up with the name Weddings and Wellies."