



Robrena HALL

When Robrena “Brena” Hall was 9, she cut up her dad’s robe to make clothes for her Barbie dolls and scribbled fashion designs on her mom’s TV Guide.

Her 2008 degree in apparel design and merchandising from CMU surprised nobody.

But fashion jobs were elusive, so Hall became a process engineer for a tier-one automotive supplier.

Today she works with chemists, leather tanners, trim engineers and designers to craft perfect, beautiful car seats.

“I notice everything,” Hall said from her Southfield office. “Not only the leather surface that’s visible, but what’s underneath. I notice the layers of foam and how they’re sewn together.

“It’s like I can see through the seat,” she said with a laugh.

She learned her technical skills at CMU.

“CMU taught me to be a designer who solves problems,” she said. “A lot of people design things just to be pretty. CMU fuses design and functionality. It can’t just be pretty — what does it do?”

“I’m not designing fashion in New York, but when somebody gets their new vehicle and they love everything about it, I was part of that design process,” she said.

Hall’s fashion dreams continue.

She designed custom swimsuits, then a swimwear line. She also started a clothing company, LUV808, and created a “Love Detroit” T-shirt collection, sold at the city’s popular Eastern Market, celebrating her hometown.

“Detroit is really special,” Hall said. “I love the strength of Detroit. I say love the good and change the bad.”

Her tees are wearable love letters: “Detroit has stolen my heart” and “Kisses from Detroit.”

“I love being out in the city and seeing someone wearing my shirt,” Hall said. “That’s what keeps me going. I try not to give up when it gets tough. I could have given up two years ago or last month or when the factory lost \$500 worth of my fabric.

“This is my way of bringing love to the world.”