


The Quilters Club: Next Generation
 A Quilters Club Mystery (Book 21)
 A Young Quilters Club Mystery (Book 1)

Marjory Sorrell Rockwell

Rhoades writes 21st Quilters Club mystery. B4

B1



Disc golf tournament returns

Flying discs to rattle 'island chains' this weekend. B7

Cross country victory

Bursa wins district crown, Fins advance. B6



FASHION MISSION



PHOTOS BY NADA KHALAF-JONES/CONTRIBUTED

Fashion designer Taylor Albury's Vega Lucia offers timeless pieces that defy fleeting trends.

Local designer advocates sustainable, upcycled, ageless style

NADA KHALAF-JONES
 Special to the Free Press

KEY LARGO — In the fast-paced world of fashion, a young brand from the Florida Keys, Vega Lucia, is seeking to make a significant impact. With every stitch, Vega Lucia is leading the charge in sustainable, slow fashion, offering timeless pieces that defy fleeting trends.

At the heart of Vega Lucia is Taylor Albury, a passionate designer based in the Upper Keys. Her journey into fashion began in 2020, sparked by her mother's old sewing machine and a desire to experiment with thrifted clothing. Albury, who has always loved fashion



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and personal style, grew tired of the feeling of forcing herself into garments that weren't truly made for her.

The global slowdown during the pandemic provided Albury with the time to delve into

sewing. She began altering secondhand pieces found at Goodwill, local thrift markets and fashion e-commerce company Depop. Her initial focus was on transforming items she loved for their fabric or shape but that

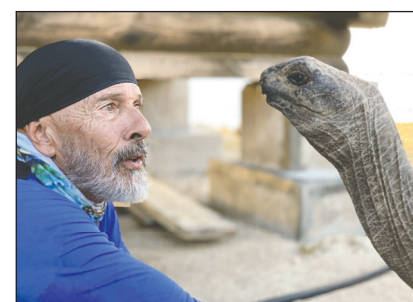
Albury says limiting herself to using thrifted, deconstructed fabrics sparks her creativity.

didn't quite fit her or reflect her unique style.

What started as a simple hobby quickly blossomed into a profound passion. For Albury, sewing is the first endeavor that has felt truly destined for her.

Albury's early successes involved creating custom garments as gifts for loved ones. These experiences not only fueled her creative process but

More **MISSION** | B2



Jack Stein Grove, a naturalist, dive master and expedition leader, is pictured with a giant tortoise. He will present a lecture titled 'William Beebe in the Galápagos' on Nov. 19 at the History of Diving Museum in Islamorada.

Galápagos expert to recount Beebe's work

ISLAMORADA — The History of Diving Museum will host Jack Stein Grove as he presents "William Beebe in the Galápagos" at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 19, at mile marker 83, bay-side.

This year marks 50 years of active conservation work and research for Grove. Employed as a naturalist, dive master and expedition leader, he has explored many of the world's oceans. For seven years, he lived aboard the ship Bucanero in the Galápagos, working as a naturalist guide for the park service and doing research for the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History and the Instituto Nacional de Pesca in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

His book, "Fishes of the Galápagos Islands," was published in 1997 and is the only comprehensive book of its kind. Today, his dedication to conservation, education and research continues in his role as executive director of the East Pacific Corridor Alliance (EPCA).

During his presentation, Grove will recount the original research in the Galápagos Islands of American naturalist, marine biologist and explorer William Beebe, whom many regard as a founder of the field of ecology, and what the islands and their creatures look like today.

Prior to the lecture, the museum will hold its November Member Mingle. Museum members and potential members alike are invited to see the "Celebrating 20 Years"

More **EXPERT** | B5



Jack Stein Grove, author of 'Fishes of the Galápagos Islands,' is pictured off Tower Island in the Galápagos.

Library branch reopens after refresh

ISLAMORADA — The Islamorada-Helen Wadley branch of the Monroe County Public Library is back open with its regular Monday through Saturday hours and programming, including Story Time, Kids Art Club and STEM Stuff.

The library recently received a top-to-bottom refresh, including carpet, paint and furniture. More

improvements are planned for coming months, as the branch prepares to

More **LIBRARY** | B3

CONTRIBUTED
 The Islamorada-Helen Wadley Branch Library has a new nonfiction and large print area, among other recent enhancements.



features

Mission/from B1

also highlighted the personal and meaningful connection that comes from crafting something that fits perfectly. This personal approach is something Albury aspires to extend to individuals seeking hand-crafted styles far beyond the Florida Keys.

Looking to the future, Albury is excited about the potential of technology to expand Vega Lucia's reach. She envisions using AI and virtual measurements to design for a global clientele, allowing her to create truly personalized clothing that feels made for each individual, no matter where they are.

Albury is eager to connect and collaborate with people worldwide to bring their unique fashion visions to life as Vega Lucia continues to evolve.

For Albury, Vega Lucia is much more than the clothing she creates. She is involved in every aspect of brand building, from designing the pieces to meticulously planning their presentation, creative direction and marketing strategies.

A core tenet of Vega Lucia is its commitment to slow fashion and creating durable pieces. This dedication manifests in various ways, including repurposing materials, prioritizing meticulous construction and designing garments that people will cherish and wear for years to come.



NADA KHALAF-JONES/CONTRIBUTED

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Albury is building Vega Lucia as an online brand, sharing her creations as she grows and fostering connections with a wider audience.

Albury posts her sewing process and designs on social media, driven by a desire to demonstrate that creativity doesn't have to be complicated or intimidating. She believes that fashion is inherently personal and expressive, and sewing empowers individuals to create pieces that genuinely reflect who they are.

"I definitely want to share what I know with others as I grow," she said.

Albury's love for fashion was cultivated from a

young age. Growing up, she reveled in costuming for dance recitals, admired outfits in magazines, shows and movies, and watched Victoria's Secret fashion shows every year. She also followed high-fashion runways each season.

"For me, it has always come back to clothing, styling and feeling confident in what I wear," Albury said.

Sewing has never felt like a chore; in fact, she often gets so absorbed that she has to remind herself to take breaks.

Her primary motivation is creating "clothing with intention." This means carefully selecting quality fabrics, paying close attention to construction and designing pieces that not only fit but also complement the person wearing them. As her brand has matured, Albury has embraced "intention" as a creative challenge,

restricting herself to her extensive collection of thrifted, deconstructed fabrics. This limitation, she says, sparks creativity.

"I started sewing by thrifting clothes and transforming them, so second-hand materials will always be a big part of my process," she said. "I still love finding old pieces I can deconstruct and redesign or repurpose materials like bedsheets, table runners, scarves and pillowcases into something completely new."

This practice of giving fabric a second life naturally enhances the sustainability of her work.

Locally, Albury has begun offering small alterations and custom work, connecting with individuals who appreciate well-fitting, personalized clothing. This allows her to use her skills to serve her community while simultaneously building the foundation of Vega Lucia, which she hopes will evolve into something much larger.

While she doesn't plan to remain in the Keys indefinitely, Albury is establishing the foundational base of her brand there. Although she dreams of eventually having a physical studio, her current focus is making her business accessible to clients online, while also championing greater creativity and individuality in fashion within the Keys.

"Growing up here, it always felt like you had to leave to find other creative people or opportunities," she said.

Albury is determined to cultivate a more vibrant creative community in her hometown. She wants to inspire young people to explore their personal style, express themselves and consider building creative

careers in smaller towns.

"Fashion has always been my way of communicating who I am, and I want to help others experience that too," she said.

Albury, who is open about sharing her sewing process and designs on social media, isn't concerned about her ideas being copied; instead, her motivation is to inspire others to embrace their own sense of style and empower them to create it.

"I want people to see that creativity doesn't have to be complicated or intimidating. Fashion is meant to be personal and expressive, and sewing gives people the freedom to create pieces that feel like them," she said. "I definitely want to share what I know with others as I grow."

In the future, Albury plans to offer sewing workshops, helping beginners gain confidence with a machine and learn to alter their own clothes.

Albury's entrepreneurial spirit was influenced by her upbringing. Her father, Zane Albury, a well-known fishing charter captain and successful small business owner, instilled in her a strong work ethic and a deep understanding of sustainability. Her family has long championed sustainable practices, with her father advocating for limits on fish extraction and favoring environmentally sound fishing methods. Their household, a hub of home-based industry, has always embraced a sustainable ethos, making a company rooted in upcycled clothing and sustainable practices a natural progression.

Albury finds joy in connecting with and supporting other small businesses, regularly attending farmers markets, thrift markets and local

events to meet the makers behind the products. "I think it makes a difference when you can connect directly with the makers and see the care and creativity that goes into their work," she said.

"I love having something that is completely my own and being able to put my heart into it."

While she describes herself as a planner, organized and structured, she allows her creativity to take over during the design process.

"When it comes to designing, I tend to throw all that out the window. I start with an idea and let it evolve as I sew, and that is when my creativity really shines," she said.

Vega Lucia's commitment to slow fashion stands in contrast to the prevalent issue of fast fashion, which Merriam-Webster defines as "an approach to the design, creation and marketing of clothing that emphasizes making fashion trends quickly and cheaply available to consumers."

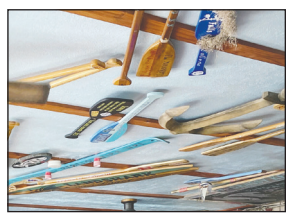
The negative environmental impact of fast fashion is immense, affecting both the production and disposal of textiles. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) documented in 2018 that more than 11.3 million tons of clothing and textiles were discarded. It is widely acknowledged that fast fashion contributes to significant environmental degradation, with discarded synthetic items accumulating in landfills and failing to biodegrade. Brands like Vega Lucia offer an alternative, demonstrating that style and sustainability can, and should, go hand-in-hand.

mystery

PHOTO



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LAST WEEK'S PHOTO:
Wreck and Galley, Grassy Key
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