

Dressing Gen Z

FRESH
FASHIONS FOR
KIDS WHO
DREAM BIG AND
LIVE LOUD.

WORDS
LAYNE CHRISTENSEN



Locally made **Redfish Kids** now offers many of its popular styles in larger sizes for tweens. The Lucky dress \$72 is available up to size 14 for spring.

PHOTOGRAPHY LEE CLOWER

“You’re not wearing that!”
Moms everywhere know the war cry of the wardrobe battle. And for parents of tweens, this is especially true as they watch their young daughters race through childhood into adolescence, flaunting flirty fashion well beyond their years.

Kids ages eight to 12 are caught between two worlds: no longer little children and not yet teens. Girls looking to express themselves through the clothes they wear have few options between the throw-away fashion the mall has to offer and the grown-up looks of a pricy designer boutique.

Wouldn’t it be nice to have a one-stop destination for trendy apparel coveted by girls and approved by mom? That was Elena Grant’s thinking when she created sofiabella.ca. The North Vancouver mompreneur sells fun, stylish and age-appropriate clothing for tween girls online and, since the fall, at her newly opened boutique in Edgemont Village.

For spring, Sofiabella is filled with clothing, footwear and accessories for the junior fashion set. There are capri denims from Miss Me, all-weather hoodies from Yogini and ruffled skirts from Desigual of Spain. All the season’s top trends are

here, though Grant says its important not to be too concerned with what’s “in,” saying “Today, fashion is so eclectic that anything goes as long as you wear it with confidence.” There is one thing you won’t find at Sofiabella: T-shirts with suggestive slogans. The store aims instead to promote positive messages for its young customers to send out to the world with what they wear: “I have value and self worth.” “I believe in myself.” “I can accomplish anything.”

Grant has even launched a campaign that encourages tweens, who she calls “bella girls,” to celebrate what makes them unique and wonderful and to share their stories on her website.

KID FRIENDLY

Can you make this in my size? It’s a question that Redfish Kids co-creator and West Vancouverite Kristy Brinkley fields not from kids but from their moms.

That’s no surprise to fans of the locally produced clothing line inspired by the street fashions of Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo and internationally represented by upscale boutiques and department stores. On the North Shore, savvy shoppers snap up the stylish togs for boys and girls

at Da Vinci’s in Ambleside, Tartoolful in Edgemont Village and Jack & Lola in Lower Lonsdale.

Moms love that Redfish clothes are locally made sweatshop-free using durable, pre-washed materials and designed for growth, movement and versatility. Pants become shorts, a swing dress becomes a smock and, best of all, says Brinkley, siblings can share each other’s clothes.

Favourites like the Mona dress, \$75, find their way into older girls’ closets. The tunic style in organic cotton bamboo is available in black or robin’s egg blue for spring. “A lot of the tweens have been buying them and throwing them over jeans,” says Brinkley, who is working with her business partner, designer Lorraine Kitsos, to produce more styles in larger sizes. Many Redfish classics are now available up to size 14.

The line’s gorgeous prints and clean silhouettes are sophisticated yet kid-appropriate. “We show our party dress with jeans and Converse tennis shoes,” says Brinkley, whose own kids, ages 3 and 6, are fans. “It’s sweet but at the same time it’s got a bit of an edge to it.”

Just like today’s tweens.

What’s trending for Spring 2011



Desigual skirt \$49 at Sofiabella.

- Flutter sleeves
- Ruffles
- Blossom prints
- Stripes
- Military details
- White