



## People To Watch

# Andi Sullivan Miller

## An Original By Andi

BY MARCIA BIGGS

Andi Sullivan Miller never planned to be a fashion designer, but then she never planned a lot of things.

Like having three strokes, the first at age 30, and going blind due to a genetic disease. Like developing lupus and being unable to walk for three years and losing the full use of her hands. Like becoming an expert at woodturning and starting programs across the United States and Canada at Lighthouse for the Blind & Low Vision. Like designing her own line of beautiful one-of-a-kind ladies denim jackets.

"My life has been a totally different path than the one I thought it would be, but a much better path it has been," said the Treasure Island resident.

Despite her physical limitations, Sullivan Miller is remarkably upbeat, humble and kind, concerned more about other sight-impaired individuals, particularly youth. Known primarily as an artistic woodturner, she creates stunning wood art from bowls and vases to intricate pens, letter openers and jewelry. In 2013, she founded the woodturning program at Lighthouse for the Blind & Low Vision in Tampa. The program eventually spread to cities with Lighthouse centers across the United States and Canada.

She was teaching and speaking at woodturning symposiums and workshops across the country, until the COVID pandemic hit earlier this year and she found herself with some time on her hands. "I started working with fabrics and denim jackets," she says. "I am all about comfort and casual. I wanted a denim jacket that could be worn in Florida, in hot weather, that would be breathable and light and still be fashionable."



Photos by Steven Le TheePhotoNinja.com  
Hair and Makeup by Melissa Collette

She decided to cut panels out of a denim jacket and insert lightweight fabrics – beautiful fabrics from Italy, New York and Paris – that would allow the air to flow through the garment. With assistance from her husband, Allen Miller, she selects fabrics and orders denim jackets. Once she cuts out the panels, each jacket with different shapes and sizes, she enlists a local seamstress to do the alterations. At first, she made a few for herself, friends and family.

"One day I was out wearing one and a local boutique owner fell in love with the jacket and wanted to carry my line," she explained. Now her fashionable jackets can be found at Suzette's on Central and Suzette's Too in Bellaire Beach; they range between \$150 and \$200. Sullivan Miller is donating the profits from each jacket to her charity, "Turning With a Vision," to go toward funding woodturning programs at Lighthouses nationwide. An animal lover with five rescue dogs, her newest

line of jackets features animal fabrics in the insets. She plans to donate those proceeds to the Humane Society of Tampa Bay.

"Each one is a canvas that I see in my head," she explains. "I hope that someday I am able to totally fund my programs with the sale of my clothing."

She feels owners of her jackets will feel proud knowing "they are helping others like myself be more independent and to have hope. A new door has opened and pandemic or no pandemic, I intend to walk through it." 🐾

To see and order jackets, go to [www.anoriginalbyandi.com](http://www.anoriginalbyandi.com) or check out Suzette's in St. Petersburg and Bellaire Beach.