

# OUT & ABOUT

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Editor: Maria Parham / 520-573-4116 / mparham@azstarnet.com

## Fast fix for fashion flaws

Rehab an ill-fitting garment with the right alterations and get a whole new look

By Debra D. Bass  
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

**F**ashion accidents happen. That pair of pants you love gets a stain that can't be coaxed out. Your favorite skirt gets a rip. A new shirt goes into the washer, instead of the dry cleaning bag. We grieve and move on.

But what about the countless items in your closet that you simply don't wear because of a flaw that isn't physical? The pants that gap at the waist. The skirt that's too long or too short.

Carmella Simpson of Mella Y Designs showed us some not-so-

typical alterations. We all know about changing a hem, but what about subtly redesigning a garment?

The trick to doing this economically is to start with clothing that is a close fit. Reconstructing something more than a size larger or smaller might not be worth the effort unless it's a wildly expensive item.

Next, you'll need to find the right person to do your alteration.

Be very clear about what you want, but be flexible. Something



**Carmella Simpson**

that sounds simple — like just taking out the cuff and making the jacket sleeves longer — gets very tricky if the sleeve is notched or split for buttons or there's a lining.

And be certain of the price before you agree to the changes. You might want to compromise and go with a different solution.

When you're thinking about redesigning an item, figure out what you really like about the item and ask yourself if it's

worth saving.

Simple things can add value: Switch out buttons, add an exposed zipper to a sheath dress, add a simple trim to the bottom of a skirt, get jackets fitted to your waist. Or if it doesn't fit, belt it!

Other things to consider: A knit dress can become a tunic; pants can become cuffed walking shorts; wool pants from a suit can become a skirt; miniskirts can be lengthened with contrasting fabric; and creative stitches can add designer details to the hem, collar and cuff of a jacket.



**BEFORE**

JOHN L. WHITE / ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH



**AFTER**

LAURIE SKRIVAN / ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH



**BEFORE**

JOHN L. WHITE / ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH



**AFTER**

LAURIE SKRIVAN / ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

← sleeve →  
cut

### Allison Babka, 32, St. Louis

- **Wardrobe problem:** a silver taffeta skirt that has a square hole torn in the back.
- **Why she kept it:** She bought it at a deep, deep discount in 2007 from a clearance rack at a JC Penney's near Pittsburgh for the attractive price of \$2.95. "Who on earth wouldn't want a gunmetal silver skirt? I've worn that sucker to work, to concerts, to the park and with all kinds of shirts — my favorite Radiohead T-shirt, fitted black shells, ordinary tank tops," Babka said. After the unfortunate accident, she held onto it, thinking that there would be some brilliant alternative to salvage her treasure. "I honestly had no idea what to do," she said, "but

it was gorgeous and less than \$3. I had to keep it. It's one of the best bargains I've ever found!"

- **The fix:** Carmella suggested shortening the skirt and lining (\$20) by a few inches. To fix the hole, she added organza and tulle to create applique flowers (\$25). As an added detail, Carmella added tulle trim to the hem (\$14).
- **For a cheaper solution:** Carmella said that she could have simply fixed the hole with a nondecorative patch using some fabric from the lining (\$10). The hole was in the rear between folds of fabric so it would not have been very noticeable. Or she could have just added the flowers (\$25) but kept the original hem.

### Karen Walsh, 55, Kirkwood, Mo.

- **Wardrobe problem:** a patterned jacket that often doubles as a top but is just too frumpy to be contemporary. The jacket was purchased three or four years ago at Chico's (\$75). Walsh wears it with a skirt she also considered for rehab. She doesn't normally wear them together.
- **Why she kept it:** Walsh said, "I loved the raw silk fabric, its earthy colors and the simple, single-thread embroidery." Even though the boxy shape of the jacket wasn't flattering, Walsh said, she just couldn't bear to get rid of it.
- **The fix:** Carmella suggested an extensive reconstruction

that would cost more than the original price of the jacket. Walsh gave it a shot because she'd now have a custom item instead of something she didn't wear. Carmella nipped in the waist by adding front and back darts (\$20 per pair), shortened the sleeves (\$20) and adjusted the armholes because, once the waist was nipped in, the placement was off (\$40). In addition to that, Carmella reshaped the jacket and added a peplum by cutting it in half and reshaped it to her natural waistline (\$45).

- **For a cheaper solution:** To fix the boxy look, she could have taken it in on the side seam (\$20), but it wouldn't be as fitted without the darting and the arm holes wouldn't be perfect.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY HUGO TORRES / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

### THIS JUST IN

## Get hairstyle like J. Lo's with Oribe's products

Jennifer Lopez's mane man Oribe has a line of hair products designed to make every-one look Jenny-from-the-block fab. Product Apothecary, 7051 N. Oracle Road in Casas Adobes Plaza, carries the line of shampoos, condi-

tioners and styling goodies. One of the standouts: Volumista (\$29). Designed to plump up fine locks, the spray goes on at the roots of damp hair. Turn the blow-dryer on and you've got long-lasting fullness.



JILL TORRANCE / ARIZONA DAILY STAR  
Oribe's hair products are available at Product Apothecary in Tucson.

### GIVEAWAY

## Win one of three pendants known as 'Phenominos'

This week's prize — Phenominos. The lovely pendants feature art on actual dominoes. Yet another twist to the pieces is that they're created by disabled artists, who are supported by jewelry sales. Art of Possibility Studios' Phenominos collec-

tion includes 27 designs. Pendants sell for \$25 each. You can find them at [aopstudios.com/store.php](http://aopstudios.com/store.php).

We're giving away three pendants. To enter, go to [azstarnet.com/contests](http://azstarnet.com/contests) by noon Tuesday.



COURTESY OF ART OF POSSIBILITIES  
Phenominos are pendants with art on actual dominoes.

### COMING SUNDAY

**WRINKLES BE GONE:** We look at noninvasive technologies to make you look more youthful.

### MORE INSIDE

**Bear Essentials**  
Doolen Middle School student Alan Cheng talks about the infamous annual egg drop. **Page C2.**



**All hail the V-neck**  
V-necks are easy, stylish and cheap. They should be on your fall fashion radar. **Page C3.**