

# Alumni Spotlight

CUYAHOGA VALLEY CAREER CENTER

## Lilly Ozog Class of 2009



Lilly Ozog, a 2009 graduate of Independence High School, took her first steps toward a career in cosmetology through the Cosmetology program at CVCC. From a young age, Lilly knew she had a passion for hair and could see herself working in the industry, but attending CVCC helped solidify that dream and confirm cosmetology was the right path for her. Today, Lilly is the owner of Vanity Avenue Salon, a role she has held since 2019 while still continuing to work behind the chair. Her journey with the salon actually began years earlier when she completed her internship there as a student. Following her internship, Lilly was hired part-time while attending Baldwin Wallace University to study business. After graduating, she transitioned into a full-time role at the salon while also becoming an educator for Joico, traveling throughout Ohio teaching classes, demonstrating techniques, and participating in hair shows in Cleveland. Lilly shared that one of her favorite parts of being an educator was getting to experience the behind-the-scenes side of the beauty industry — from preparing models and teaching techniques to helping other stylists grow. Through those experiences, she realized just how many different career opportunities exist within cosmetology. Whether working behind the chair, becoming an educator, owning a salon, or working in product sales, Lilly believes the possibilities within the industry are endless. Just six months before the COVID-19 pandemic, Lilly purchased Vanity Avenue Salon. As education shifted online during that time, she ultimately decided to step away from educating to focus fully on the salon.

Looking back on her time at CVCC, Lilly says attending the career center made her high school experience far more meaningful because she was able to spend more time learning something she genuinely loved instead of simply taking classes to fulfill graduation requirements. Some of Lilly's favorite memories from the program were the creative projects that allowed students to think outside the box. One project that especially stands out to her was the annual mannequin head competition, where students created hairstyles using unconventional materials instead of real hair. Lilly remembers creating a zebra-inspired mannequin using broom bristles for a mohawk one year, followed by a Medusa-inspired design made with plastic snakes the next. She also loved the customer service days where students worked directly with clients. Those experiences gave Lilly an early glimpse into what life in the industry would actually look like and confirmed that cosmetology was the career path she wanted to pursue. She especially loved that every day in the field felt different. One lesson Lilly continues to carry with her is the importance of always being willing to learn. She believes that excitement for learning something new is one of the clearest signs that you are in the right career field. Recently, Lilly hired one of CVCC's newest Cosmetology graduates, Hiedi, full-time at Vanity Avenue Salon. Although Hiedi did not intern at the salon, Lilly said she was highly impressed by her willingness to ask questions and her desire to learn and grow. Mentoring young stylists like Hiedi, as well as previous CVCC graduates she has worked with, has helped shape Lilly's perspective on training new professionals and getting them ready for the floor. She says they've reminded her that mistakes are a necessary part of learning and growth, both for students and for mentors guiding them along the way. Reflecting on her journey, Lilly says she is incredibly thankful for the opportunities CVCC provided her and is grateful to now give back by mentoring and supporting current students through internships and employment opportunities. Keep up the great work, Lilly! We are so grateful for your continued support of CVCC and our students, and we are proud to call you a CVCC alum.

Written By: Makayla Robertson, CVCC Media Specialist

