

APPLAUSE!



Leslie Ligon, 1994, Mass Communications, Dance

TWU Alumna, Leslie Ligon, Wins National Design Award

Leslie Ligon has applied her TWU Mass Communications degree in a very unique way by creating a line of jewelry to promote Braille literacy to both sighted and blindness communities.

In October of 2010, Ms, Ligon was awarded the 5th Annual People's Design Award for the design of her Braille Alphabet Bracelet at the National Design Awards Gala hosted by fashion designer Cynthia Rowley, and White House Deputy Social Secretary Ebs Burnough, and the Associate Director for the Cooper-Hewitt Caroline Baumann, sponsored by the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum. The Cooper-Hewitt Museum, a member of the Smithsonian Institution, is the only museum in America dedicated to the celebration of contemporary and historical design and its influences on society. The list of honorees included, among others, fashion designer Kieran Timberlake, and architect William Sofield, but the People's Design Award gives the general public an opportunity to nominate and vote for a design of their choice at the Cooper-Hewitt's web site.

The People's Design award is voted on by the general public through the Cooper-Hewitt web site making it even more meaningful to this alumna who now resides in Denton. She hopes that her jewelry helps increase awareness of Braille which she hope to help make as prominent to the general public as American Sign Language is for the deaf. "According to the American Foundation for the Blind, as few as 10% of people who are legally blind learn to read and write Braille and only about 32 percent of the legally blind population is employed," says Leslie.



The award winning bracelet – Braille on one side, the letter on the other.

Ligon began this journey thirteen years ago when, at her first son's two-month well-baby exam, the pediatrician determined that he was not seeing. In the ensuing years, when discussing Braille, she often encountered people who would say, "Oh I know what Braille is; it's those elevator dots." Confronted with this general lack of awareness among the sighted public of the importance of Braille and Braille literacy, Ligon sought a way to spread the word. As a result, she created At First Sight Braille Jewelry, and began selling the world's first mass-produced, readable Braille jewelry. Her signature piece, the Braille Alphabet Bracelet, features the entire alphabet in Braille on the front and print on the back. It has been dubbed the "Braille fashion cheat sheet"! She now sells her jewelry online at www.braillejewelry.blogspot.com

Leslie, a transfer student to **TWU**, has nothing but great things to say about her time at the university. She believes that she gained poise and self-confidence that have allowed her to succeed. "The professors worked with me to help me realize my goals," she said. "They took time for me and provided opportunities for me that I would not have had otherwise. "