

**“I Dream To” is an innovative photojournalism program empowering teen girls to discover and explore various career opportunities while building self-esteem and leadership skills in photography, journalism, and critical thinking, and are inspired to dream big. Ultimately, Step Up connects each girl with a professional woman in a career of the girl’s choice to learn directly from the woman living the teen’s dream, and to realize the possibility of achieving it herself.**

*I Dream to be an **Interior Designer***

By: **Emily Januszewski**



After spending an afternoon with **Laura Barnett**, the 55 year-old President of Laura Barnett Designs, I learned that being an interior designer is not as easy as it may seem. Before she was an interior designer, Laura wanted to be a fashion designer. It all started in her high school art class. There were two assignments: one to draw your room and another to draw your house. A family friend saw the drawings and was shocked at Laura’s natural inclination to straight edges. She didn’t pick interior design, it picked her.

She attended the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts and majored in interior architecture. After graduation, Laura did not go straight into the business of interior design. Her husband owned an accessory store and Laura worked there. She “hated it because there was no creativity involved.” She had a 3-year-old daughter, Danielle, and was going through a divorce. She had to find a job where she would be able to bring her daughter to work. Someone she knew needed a new office. This was Laura’s first project as an interior designer. Laura was now looking for other projects and met someone who owned and kitchen and bath company. She became a part of the design staff and brought her daughter to work daily. The clients she worked with in this company became *her* clients when she established the Laura Barnett Designs firm. Laura does not yet believe that she is a household name, but she does have a reputation in Chicago after being in business for 27 years. She has appeared on many talk shows and in many magazines.

In her spare time, Laura loves to ballroom dance, sing with a chorus, read, or attend the opera or theater. She is a part of the Parkways Foundation and is on the board of the Costume Council of the Chicago Historical Society. Laura revealed that her greatest accomplishment outside of the workplace is “having a sane child.” Danielle is now 30 years old and has a good relationship with her mother.

From this interview, I learned that working hard and being patient can get you to the place you want to be. It showed me that interior design requires a lot of diligent work and creativity. **This experience will stay with me forever and help me remember to work hard and dream big.**

