TIE THE KNOT BRIDAL BOUTIQUE

Jessica Van Gorden, Owner

Photos by Julie M. Gile Photography
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Most brides have dreamed of their wedding day long before the engagement ring. It is a vision shaped by years of conversations among best friends, Pinterest scrolling, and countless rom-com movies.

While there is excitement in all the details, like the venue, flowers, and music, it's the dress that takes the cake. The moment the bride steps into it, the years of fantasizing become real, and it's time for her fairytale ending with the partner of her dreams.

That is the magic Jessica Van Gorden has built at Tie the Knot Bridal Boutique. It is a place where brides can find their dream dress while creating unforgettable moments in the heart of downtown Green Bay's Broadway District. It wasn't always in Jessica's plan to create blissful bridal experiences; in fact, for a long time, weddings weren't even on her radar.

"Moving to the Broadway District was strategic for us."

Jessica grew up in Green Bay and attended school at UW Oshkosh for public relations. After graduating, she landed an incredible internship with the Green Bay Packers. It was an opportunity that made her want to plant roots close to home.

"I love the Green Bay area," Jessica says. "We're such a resilient little city. We do big things, more so than other markets our size. There is just something special about it here."

Jessica's journey took a twist when a set of photos she took for her internship were harshly critiqued.

"That inspired me to figure out what I was doing, and through that, I grew really passionate about photography," she says.

A cousin asked her to photograph their wedding in Mexico, which unknowingly ended up shaping her entire career.

"In sharing those first wedding photos, other people started reaching out. It just kind of spontaneously happened," Jessica says. "Before I knew it, I ended up leaving my corporate job and doing photography full-time."

For years, Jessica was capturing stunning weddings in the Midwest, but this niche is seasonal, and winter brought more free time. Eventually, Jessica decided to search for something to productively fill the time.

With her background in weddings, she was drawn to a local bridal boutique, Tie the Knot. She was offered a stylist position in 2018, and three years later, in 2021, a larger conversation ensued.

“The owner had started talking about wanting to sell the boutique. She had a conversation with me one day and asked if I would be interested in taking it over,” Jessica says. “At first, I was like, absolutely not. It felt like a way bigger scale than my photography business. I didn't think I had time, which I didn't, but the more I thought about it, the more I knew I would regret it if I didn’t do it.”

After talking it through with her now-husband, Jessica decided to go for it. She bought the boutique with a vision of not just running a bridal shop, but redefining the bridal shopping experience in Green Bay.

“Strategically, I knew we needed to move,” she says. “I noticed that so many brides would go to Chicago or Milwaukee for the same designers we carry already. They went there for the experience, not the dress. I thought if I'm going to do this, I need a new space where we can give the bride the experience that she's looking for, across the board.”

Jessica searched all over Green Bay looking for a space that would feel elegant, inviting, and perfect for creating the experience brides wanted. She found that perfect spot in downtown Green Bay’s Broadway District. It was a blank canvas that required a creative imagination to see its potential.

When I walked in here, it was just blank. There were no walls. It was just concrete. There was nothing in here, but they had the big windows in the front,” Jessica says.

“I remember I walked out the first day, and though it seemed like a massive undertaking, I kept thinking about the space after I left. There was just so much character.”

With the help of her friend Erin, a local interior designer, Jessica transformed the space into something truly stunning.

“Moving to the Broadway District was strategic for us,” Jessica says. “Brides are looking to make dress shopping an all-day event. They want it to last longer than just the appointment, so I was looking for a part of town where things are walkable and close by. On Broadway has given us the ability to create the type of shopping experience that was important to us.”

Since making the move, sales have more than doubled, and the boutique now offers two locations: the main shop on Broadway Street and the original space on Military Avenue, which has become Tie the Knot Off the Rack, where brides can find discounted dresses with the same amazing shopping experience.

The wild success of Tie the Knot is not just because of the locations, it’s due to the dedicated team of passionate women who work there, many of whom have been with the boutique for years.

“My main motto is always: give the people what they want,” Jessica says. “We want to be known for our welcoming environment, and we want the bride to know from start to finish that she's being taken care of.”

This philosophy drives Jessica and her team to go above and beyond to create a magical and memorable experience for every bride who walks through their door.

“When she comes in, we'll have her name on the board,” Jessica says. “Our staff does a lot of behind-the-scenes work to provide the bride with a letter and potentially flowers from her fiancé.”

Jessica has also made it a priority to impact the surrounding community. She has a strong focus on giving to organizations that serve women. In addition, she has been closely involved in the local wedding community as well.

There are a lot of really good vendors and professionals that I have gotten to know over the years, and we're a close-knit little community,” Jessica says.

That sense of support and community has spread beyond the wedding industry, and Jessica feels it through the dedication of the Broadway District.

“The whole team at On Broadway has been wonderful,” Jessica says. “They have been very welcoming and supportive. Even business resource-wise, I know they are always there to bounce ideas off, too.”

On Broadway, Inc.’s support became even clearer when they chose Jessica as a recipient of the Diverse Business Grant. She plans to use it to help elevate her boutique’s visibility with a beautiful new window display to enhance the bride’s experience from the moment they arrive.

“I'm so excited to have been awarded the Diverse Business Grant,” she says. “It was wonderful. It felt really special to be picked and recognized in that way.”

The Diverse Business Grant is designed to uplift small, diverse businesses, and as a woman reshaping what the bridal shopping experience looks like in Green Bay, the grant was a meaningful recognition of her impact on the local business scene.

Looking back on her career, Jessica’s journey may not have been what she imagined it would be in college, but it is exactly where she is supposed to be.

“There is so much about this job that I love, like the fashion, travel, and the strategy of looking at trends and figuring out what is going to sell in the Midwest,” she says. “More than that, I just love helping people find the perfect dress for one of the most important days of their lives. I feel so lucky that I don’t ever feel like I am actually working. I love this business and this industry.”

That’s one of the many lessons she hopes to pass on to her young son.

“I want him to do whatever makes him happy,” Jessica says. “This whole journey of buying this business and doing something completely different than what I went to school for—it’s been a lesson. I want my son to find something he loves, something that doesn’t feel like work. I want him to be happy every day.”

At Tie the Knot, it’s more than finding a dress. It’s about making an unforgettable memory on a bride’s wedding journey in Green Bay that will last a lifetime.

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