

Warren Township High School Student Works as a Professional Special FX Makeup Artist.



Imagine walking down the halls of a haunted house looking at all the monsters, the blood, and the gore like something straight out of your nightmares. As you walk down the dark hallway with flashing lights and blood on the walls, in the distance you hear a gut wrenching scream. You know it isn't real but, someone had to make those things look real, that someone is seventeen year old makeup artist Jilian Tapia. She is a Warren Township High School student who spends her free time working as a professional fx makeup artist at the Dungeon of Doom haunted house in Zion, Illinois. Her work has earned her numerous opportunities in the past year such as several job offers like an internship on the television show "Chicago fire" and working on injury simulations for the US military.

She has always been fascinated by horror films and counted down the days until Halloween. She always loved to play with makeup from a young age and in middle school was involved in makeup crew for drama club. But it wasn't until her sophomore year of high school that she began to seriously pursue this as a hobby.

"It was actually a project I did in math class my sophomore year that really pushed me to take my hobby to the next level," she recalled, "my teacher and classmates were all amazed by what I could do and that encouraged me to pursue it." She even mentioned her teacher, Mr.Longo, who is a math teacher at the O'Plaine campus, is still one of her biggest fans, and continues to support her to this day.

Mr. Longo has expressed how amazed he is at Jilian's talents, and how he is happy to play a role in getting her to pursue her passion. "I can only take a small amount of credit. I only gave her a reason to try it. All she has accomplished since then was all her doing," he commented. He still runs this project in all of his math classes and says it is his favorite part of the year.

Additionally, Mr.Longo describes Jilian as four words, "fearless, strong, passionate, and caring." He said the most amazing thing about watching her talents unfold was her increase in confidence. "She went from being a student who was very unsure of herself saying how math wasn't her favorite and that she was not good at many things. After she began doing makeup, her confidence soared. She would refuse to allow anything to stand in her way." He also stated watching Jilian inspired him to continue teaching students to take risks and to "never stand in the way of yourself."

“It was crazy because I didn’t think something that I did for fun would lead to so many opportunities,” says Tapia.

Over the course of the next year, her resume continued to expand as she landed her first makeup gig at Dungeon of Doom haunted house. Dungeon is one of the most well known and intense haunted houses in the country, the work that they do, especially in the makeup department, has caused it to receive lots of praise since its opening.



She spends hours and sometimes even full days creating and sculpting all of the terrifying looks the visitors see as they walk through. Then comes a full night of scaring guests using her talents from her second love, which is acting. Tapia attributes all of her recent success to the haunted house stating, “because of my job I feel accomplished and determined. It has made me so excited for the future.”

Her proudest moments so far have been getting to present her work to other famous artists such as Ve Neill, the lead makeup director on the Hunger Games movies, and even spotting her face on a billboard. She says without the support of her friends and mentors at Dungeon of Doom, she would never have thought any of this would have been attainable.



One person that comes to mind is her coworker and now boyfriend Tristan Cook. He began working at Dungeon of Doom nine years ago alongside his father who owns an airbrush makeup company.

"Jilian is absolutely crazy at Dungeon of Doom, everyone else just loves it. She carries an energy and gets people riled up," he says. "Her work is awesome. Everything is so realistic but she puts her own creative spin on all her stuff." Tristan recalls some of his favorite memories at Dungeon of Doom to be watching Jilian scare people every night and getting to spend time with her doing what they both love.



Reeling from all of her accomplishments, it is not surprise that she has big plans for her future. She told me, "next year I will be moving to Arizona to accept a job doing simulations for the military. I would also love to start my own business or get to work on huge Hollywood productions." Tapia also plans to spend time in Los Angeles attending special fx makeup school to expand her knowledge of the craft. In the near future, she is excited to begin working on her next big project, a photo shoot for Hauntworld magazine.

"Working as a makeup artist has opened numerous doors for me and came at a time in my life when I needed it most. I could not be more excited for the future."