

When in chrome

Junior Sophie Wydeven builds nail business from glitter and a dream

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For junior Sophie Wydeven, faux nails aren't just an accessory: they're a love language. Initially, when she began learning about nail art during the pandemic, she practiced on her friends and family. But since her nail business' founding in 2023, Wydeven has amassed a loyal clientele of dozens through her devotion to her craft.

"I like to see people's smiles after a good set," Wydeven said. "I can't see myself not doing nails. Even when I'm doing press-on sets, it's really soothing to do press-ons by myself alone. But it's also a social thing. I get to talk with a friend for a few hours."

Primarily working with GelX, a nail extension system, Wydeven's true passion is for design. From Hello Kitty to goth themed nails, constantly seeks her technical expertise. Currently, she's

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— junior
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enthralled by bangle nails (a style that emulates jewelry), orchid motifs and gold accents.

"I love doing more intricate designs, like ethereal designs with gold chrome," Wydeven said. "I definitely want to go back to doing some acrylics along with GelX. I also want to get better with airbrushing. For certain designs, like ombre, I've been doing them with an eyeshadow brush. But I want to get more precise."

Wydeven also takes inspiration from historic art, such as symbolist painter Gustav Klimt's "The Kiss." This piece emerged from Klimt's "Golden Epoch," a period in which he drew from the influences

of Byzantine mosaics, Egyptian artifacts and Viennese artisanal traditions to create opulent works of art, liberated from

conventional norms of European painting.

"I was going to Italy last summer and I wanted some nails for that, so I did a set based off 'The Kiss,'" Wydeven said.

"They were on my hands all throughout Europe, and I miss the memories I made them with. I think art will always be inspired to some degree by trends, but sometimes it's spontaneous.

The way that I'm feeling will be put into my nails."

For her father, AP English and film analysis teacher Eric Wydeven, Sophie's creative inclinations came as no surprise. In fact, they're a family heirloom. Wydeven welds in his spare time, while his wife sews and reupholsters furniture.

"For six Christmases, I've made my wife these metal flowers," Wydeven said. "I think Sophie has seen that you can repurpose things and make them into objects of beauty."

Wydeven also believes that TikTok's nail art scene and the

This set derives inspiration from the neo-Y2K aesthetic. Photo courtesy of Wydeven.

medium of social media were contributing factors in the success of his daughter's nail business.

During the pandemic, Sophie ran a fan account for the Minecraft influencer Dream, which allowed her to gain experience in marketing and social media analytics.

"TikTok probably had the most influence over the nail thing as anything else," Wydeven said.

"She first gained some notoriety because she was a Dream fanatic and had a website associated with him. She had 30k followers on her Dream account.

That was the business side of it: the idea of a clientele."

Not only does Sophie run a nail business, but she also babysits and works at Fruitealicious, a boba shop.

But she didn't apply online or respond to a "We're Hiring" sign. Instead, Wydeven created the opportunity.

"I've been going there for years," Wydeven said. "I asked them if they were hiring one day, and they said no, but in the future, they would. Then I got a text from the manager and he said he wanted to interview me. If I want something, I'm going to do my best to make it happen."

Wydeven also attributes her entrepreneurial spirit to the various odd jobs and businesses she created throughout her childhood. Currently, Wydeven hopes to major in business management in college.

"You know, in school, when people would sell slime? I did that," Wydeven said. "When slime was out, I'd draw faces on potatoes and make clothes and sell them. I will probably wind up making some kind of job out of nails in the future. Business school can point you in any direction you want, so if I ever decided to move away from nails, I'd still have a degree."

For junior Athena Wintle, Wydeven's friend and classmate, Wydeven's creativity is only eclipsed by her careful aesthetic judgment.

"I'll go see her and I'll have an incomplete idea of what I want and she'll flesh it out," Wintle said. "She's very good at advising and I trust her every time because I've never



This set derives inspiration from Hawaiian hibiscuses. Photo courtesy of Wydeven.

had a bad set from her. She saves me from making bad decisions about nails."

Wintle and Wydeven have known each other since seventh grade, but bonded during freshman year in a tech theatre class. While Wydeven often does nails for her inner circle, Wintle said this isn't an exclusive policy.

"Everyone that I've talked to loves her and her work," Wintle said. "A lot of people say they're scared to reach out or don't know how because she does her friend's nails, but she's really accommodating."

Still, one element of Wydeven's success dismays Wintle.

"I should've gatekept her," Wintle said. "She has so many clients now, and I have to book her a week in advance!"



This set derives inspiration from Sailor Moon, a Japanese anime and a common reference in the online nail space. Photo courtesy of Wydeven.