

CAREER ARCHIVE

Gillian Elayne Farinella

Product Designer 🐾 Front-End Developer 🐾 Creative Systems Thinker

I don't just design or build things. I create them — and then I can't stop improving them.

ABOUT ME

Interior design for the computer.

I bring life to projects by making them work better and making them prettier — usually in the same sitting. Every layout, animation, color and interaction changes how someone feels while they're using something, and that's the part I actually care about.

Code is a creative medium to me, the same as a sketchbook. I like turning words and numbers into something that actually feels good to use.

Product Design

Front-End Development

UX

Branding

Technology

Leadership

ONLINE

gillianelaynefarinella.com

Design, development, projects, photography, writing, and the full live archive.



Where design, development, and story meet.

I move comfortably between brand design, front-end development, and creative direction — but if you read the chapters below, the throughline isn't really a discipline. It's a habit of noticing what isn't working yet and wanting to fix it, whether that's a clunky interface, a disorganized newsroom, or a gap in mental healthcare I couldn't find anyone else filling.

My background spans graphic design, front-end development, customer-facing service work, and team leadership, and I've found the skills carry over more than people expect. Reading a room at a senior living community isn't so different from reading a user in a usability test. Running a newsroom isn't so different from running a sprint.

Product & Brand Design

Front-End Development

Team Leadership

Creative Direction

Client & People Experience

Visual Storytelling

EDUCATION

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts, Digital Media Design

University of St. Thomas · St. Paul, MN

2021 - 2025

- 🐾 Held progressively senior roles at The Crest (formerly TommieMedia), the university's student media outlet — from Design Intern through Design Lead to Executive Director.
- 🐾 Active in campus leadership through the Student Ambassador, Welcome Day Leader, and Campus Tour Guide programs.

CORE SKILLS

Design

FigmaAdobe IllustratorAdobe PhotoshopTypographyBrand IdentityUI/UX Design

Development

HTML & CSSJavaScriptReactResponsive DesignGit & GitHub

Creative & Strategy

Creative DirectionContent StrategyVisual StorytellingPhotography

Tools & Process

NotionAgile CollaborationAI-Assisted WorkflowsRapid Prototyping

Head Waitress

2017 - 2022

2017 - 2022

Head Waitress

Gabby's Eats & Treats

My first long-term job taught me the foundation of almost every professional skill I still use today — starting as a waitress and eventually becoming Head Waitress, balancing customer service, leadership, multitasking, and problem solving in a fast-paced environment.

Highlights

- 👑 Promoted to Head Waitress after my first year.
- 👑 Frequently trusted to close the restaurant independently.
- 👑 Managed shifts while coordinating with kitchen staff and fellow servers.
- 👑 Resolved customer concerns and escalated complex situations to ownership when appropriate.
- 👑 Regularly balanced up to 10 tables while maintaining quality service.
- 👑 Built lasting relationships with regular customers and the local community.

Skills Gained

Customer Service

Leadership

Multitasking

Communication

Conflict Resolution

Time Management

What I took away

Hospitality taught me that every interaction matters. I learned how to stay calm under pressure, juggle competing priorities, and make people feel welcome even on the busiest days. Those customer service and communication skills have become the foundation for every role I've held since.

Marketing & Communications Intern

SUMMER 2022

Summer 2022

Marketing & Communications Intern

R&J Broadcasting · Brainerd Lakes Area, MN

Reading a room at Gabby's translated surprisingly well to reading an audience — that summer, R&J Broadcasting gave me my first real introduction to professional marketing through graphic design, social media, administrative support, and community outreach.

Highlights

- 🐾 Managed social media accounts and designed promotional graphics.
- 🐾 Updated administrative paperwork and supported marketing initiatives across multiple stations.
- 🐾 Represented the company at county fairs and local community events.
- 🐾 Recorded promotional advertisements.

Tools + Context

Adobe Creative Suite

Canva

Social Media Platforms

Microsoft Office

Google Workspace

Skills Gained

Social Media Management

Graphic Design

Marketing

Brand Communications

Event Marketing

Public Engagement

What I took away

This internship showed me that successful marketing extends far beyond making attractive graphics. Every interaction, event, and piece of content contributes to how people experience a brand — and it reinforced my love for combining creativity with communication.

Campus Tour Guide

2022 - 2023

2022 - 2023

Campus Tour Guide

University of St. Thomas · St. Paul, MN

Around the same time, the same comfort talking to strangers that I'd built at Gabby's found a new outlet on campus — I welcomed prospective students and families to the University of St. Thomas, leading more than 50 tours and sharing the university's story through real conversation instead of a script.

Highlights

- 👑 Led 50+ campus tours and trained new tour guides.
- 👑 Adapted presentations for different audiences and answered questions on the spot.
- 👑 Represented the university at admissions events.

What I took away

This role strengthened my confidence in public speaking and taught me how to talk with people from a lot of different backgrounds. It also reinforced that the best presentations feel like conversations, not scripts.

Design Lead

2022 - 2023

2022 - 2023

Design Lead

The Crest (formerly TommieMedia) · St. Paul, MN

The design instincts R&J Broadcasting sharpened that summer found a bigger stage that fall, managing a team of student designers responsible for the graphics and visual identity that supported the newsroom's journalism.

Highlights

- 👑 Led a team of 5-10 designers and assigned weekly projects.
- 👑 Worked alongside editors and reporters to support their stories visually.
- 👑 Created templates that let non-designers produce consistent graphics.
- 👑 Developed new storytelling formats centered on visual communication.
- 👑 Designed graphics used across the website and social media.

Skills Gained

Art Direction

Team Leadership

Editorial Design

Information Design

Visual Storytelling

What I took away

Good design isn't just about making things look better — it's about making information easier to understand. Giving people better tools and clearer systems empowers them to do better work.

Executive Director

2023 - 2025

May 2023 - May 2025

Executive Director

The Crest (formerly TommieMedia) · St. Paul, MN

The same belief that clear systems set people up to do better work followed me from the design room into the newsroom, where I ended up running one of the university's largest student organizations — a 17-member leadership team and a newsroom of 20 to 50 student journalists, designers, photographers, and broadcasters — as the longest-serving Executive Director in the organization's history.

Highlights

- 🐾 Led a 17-member executive leadership team and oversaw a newsroom of 20–50 staff.
- 🐾 Ran weekly leadership meetings and took part in recruiting and interviewing new staff.
- 🐾 Facilitated difficult conversations with leadership and staff, and worked closely with faculty advisors.
- 🐾 Helped guide the organization's rebrand from TommieMedia to The Crest.
- 🐾 Introduced a more collaborative, approachable leadership style.

Skills Gained

Leadership

Organizational Management

Conflict Resolution

Mentorship

Communication

Strategic Planning

What I took away

Leadership isn't about authority. It's about creating an environment where people can succeed. People respond best to leaders who are approachable, communicative, and genuinely invested in helping them grow.

Client Success Lead

2025

July 2025 – September 2025

Client Success Lead

FurnitureDealer.Net · Remote

The leadership and communication instincts I'd been building since the newsroom got their first real test outside a campus org chart — I partnered with independently owned furniture retailers across the country to strengthen their digital presence, blending design, technology, communication, and strategy into one collaborative role.

Highlights

- 🐾 Managed relationships with small-business clients across the United States as their primary point of contact.
- 🐾 Ran weekly Google Meet consultations and communicated daily by email, phone, and video.
- 🐾 Designed and updated client websites using the company's proprietary CMS.
- 🐾 Improved SEO and visual branding for client sites.
- 🐾 Assisted with product management systems and digital content.

Tools + Context

Google Workspace

Google Meet

Google Analytics

Proprietary CRM

Proprietary CMS

SEO

Website Design

Skills Gained

Client Success

Digital Strategy

UX Thinking

Website Management

SEO

Communication

Project Management

What I took away

This was my first true “big girl” office job, and it gave me a strong foundation in professional client communication. I came away with a deeper appreciation for slowing down when needed, communicating progress, and aligning with team expectations — even when my instinct is to move fast and just execute.

Life Enrichment Assistant

2025 - 2026

2025 - 2026

Life Enrichment Assistant

Round Lake Senior Living

The same hospitality instincts I first built at Gabby's — reading the room, keeping people comfortable, making a busy day feel calm — resurfaced in an entirely different setting at Round Lake. I planned and led activities that brought social connection, creativity, and joy into residents' everyday lives, from games and holiday decorating to simply spending one-on-one time with the people who lived there.

Highlights

- 👑 Led daily group activities and games for residents.
- 👑 Adapted activities on the fly when plans changed unexpectedly.
- 👑 Decorated community spaces for seasonal events.
- 👑 Worked one-on-one with residents while also facilitating larger group activities.
- 👑 Built relationships with residents and encouraged participation.
- 👑 Assisted with event setup and cleanup.

Tools + Context

Event Planning

Activity Coordination

Communication

Team Collaboration

Skills Gained

Patience

Event Coordination

Communication

Adaptability

Empathy

Creative Problem Solving

What I took away

This role taught me incredible patience. Working with older adults reminded me that everyone moves through life at a different pace, and creating meaningful experiences often matters more than sticking rigidly to a schedule. Residents like Judy also showed me how much personality and leadership exist in every community, if you're willing to embrace it.

Sales Representative

2026

February 2026 – April 2026

Sales Representative

Bridge Locations (Xfinity Authorized Retailer)

The patience I'd practiced at Round Lake — meeting people exactly where they were, without rushing them — showed up again at the Xfinity counter. As a Sales Representative, I helped customers navigate internet, mobile, television, and home technology, and learned firsthand that understanding technology isn't enough; the real skill is helping someone else feel confident using it.

Highlights

- 🐾 Consulted with customers to recommend internet, mobile, television, and smart home services.
- 🐾 Built trust by simplifying complex technology into understandable recommendations.
- 🐾 Consistently met sales goals while keeping a customer-first approach.
- 🐾 Stayed current on evolving products and promotions.
- 🐾 Balanced sales performance with honest, personalized recommendations.

Tools + Context

Xfinity Systems

CRM Software

Point-of-Sale Systems

Mobile Devices

Consumer Technology

Skills Gained

Technology Sales

Customer Experience

Product Education

Relationship Building

Communication

Problem Solving

What I took away

I've always loved technology, but this role taught me that understanding it isn't enough — the real skill is helping someone else feel confident using it. Great customer experiences come from education, patience, and making people feel comfortable asking questions.

Moodflower

2026 - PRESENT 🐾 FOUNDER & PRODUCT DESIGNER

The wellness app I built because I couldn't find one that fit.

After years of searching for a mental wellness app that actually fit — and building myself a Notion system when none of them did — I designed, built, and launched Moodflower myself: a calmer way to track moods and reflect, built on the belief that healthcare is a human right.



Highlights

- 🐾 Owned product design, UX/UI design, front-end development, branding, and product strategy solo, end to end.
- 🐾 Kept core mood-tracking and reflection tools free by design, with no paywall on the essentials.
- 🐾 Designed around a calm, low-pressure interface, so checking in never feels like one more task on the list.

Product Design

UX/UI Design

Front-End Development

Branding

Product Strategy

Wellness Tech

What I took away

Building something because you genuinely need it to exist is a different kind of motivation than building for a client or a brief — it's taught me how much clearer decisions get when the mission, not the market, sets the priorities. The patience from hospitality and caregiving, the instinct to build clearer systems from the newsroom, the comfort helping someone through something confusing and a little scary — all of it shows up here, just pointed at something that matters more.

Smaller chapters that still shaped the bigger one.

Design Intern

The Crest (formerly TommieMedia) · St. Paul, MN

2022

First steps into student media design, before stepping into the Design Lead role.

Student Ambassador & Welcome Day Leader

University of St. Thomas · St. Paul, MN

2022 - 2025

Volunteer campus leadership, welcoming incoming students to St. Thomas.

Executive Assistant

University of St. Thomas · St. Paul, MN

2024 - 2025

Administrative and organizational support at the university level.

Waitress

Big 10 Bar & Grill

September 2025

Front-of-house service and customer care.

NEXT STEPS

Start the conversation.

Email: gillianfarinella@gmail.com

Portfolio: gillianelaynefarinella.com

