Dress for Success Saskatoon

Organization Backgrounder

Dress for Success® helps disadvantaged women transition into the workforce by providing professional attire and career development tools.

Establishment

Fay Gabrielson, a retired retail business owner and Cathy Mills, a retired school superintendent secured a Saskatoon affiliate of Dress for Success in October 2011. Fay Gabrielson remains with the organization as Board Chair. The affiliate has operated out of a leased space at 215-103 Street East in Saskatoon since September 2012. We are a not-for-profit organization operated exclusively by volunteers.

How does it work?

Disadvantaged women who are entering or re-entering the workforce after career training are referred to Dress for Success (DFS) Saskatoon as clients by agencies such as the YWCA, The Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre, Quint Development Corporation, and Radius Community Centre. Currently we work with over 30 agencies in Saskatoon and area. Prospective clients must have a job interview booked. The client fills out a form providing information on her size, clothing preferences, favourite colors, etc.

A trained Dress for Success Saskatoon style consultant, called a ‘suitor,’ together with two assistants prepare for the client’s first appointment at DFS Saskatoon, an ‘interview suiting’, by selecting a few possible outfits from our stock of donated, gently-used professional clothing. At the interview suiting, the client is given a confidence boost with her ‘boutique experience’ and her interaction with the volunteers who provide her with advice and service, as she tries on the pieces and selects an interview outfit, complete with shoes, bag, and an accessory.

When the client successfully secures employment, she is invited to return to DFS Saskatoon to select a week’s wardrobe of up to 30 pieces to mix and match in order to carry her through her first weeks and months of work.

Web: www.dressforsuccess.org/saskatoon
Email: saskatoon@dressforsuccess.org
She is also invited to join the Professional Women’s Group at DFS, which provides speakers and networking for clients who need support after entering the workforce, addressing issues such as personal financial management, work/life balance, workplace etiquette, and navigating workplace politics. All of these services are provided free of charge to clients.

**What’s the Track Record?**

Dress for Success was started in 1997 in New York City. Since that time, it has helped more than 750,000 disadvantaged women transition into the workforce by providing professional attire and career development tools. There are over 130 Dress for Success affiliates in 13 countries around the world, including eleven affiliates in Canada, two of which are in Saskatchewan. For more information on Dress for Success’s history and mission, see the Worldwide headquarters website: [http://www.dressforsuccess.org/](http://www.dressforsuccess.org/).

**A need in Saskatoon**

Although many non-profit agencies in Saskatoon provide employment training and services, DFS Saskatoon is the only organization that provides interview clothing and a full wardrobe of professional attire free of charge to disadvantaged women in Saskatoon and area. It’s said that first impressions are made within the initial 60 seconds of meeting someone. These impressions go beyond conclusions on stylishness or taste, right to subconscious judgments on how responsible, reliable, vigilant, and trustworthy an individual may be. DFS Saskatoon strives not only to help a woman ensure those first impressions are favourable, but to provide her with an invaluable sense of self-confidence and an expectation of respect given and received.

Dress for Success Saskatoon aims to meet another unmet need in our community in its after-hire programming that provides women new to the workforce an opportunity to learn networking skills and refine life skills important for workplace success. Our post-employment programming will fill a distinct niche that connects new workers with successful female entrepreneurs and leaders in our community. Our Professional Women’s Group, which will meet monthly, is projected to start in 2015.

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