

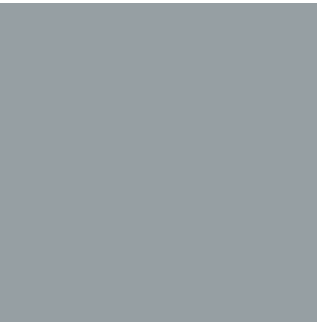
news threads

Issue 1

September 2007



from
suits to
suitability



DRESS FOR SUCCESS[®]
LONDON



Kathy
Seligman

Chair, Board of Trustees.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, welcome to *news threads*, the first edition of our bi-annual newsletter that aims to share the exciting achievements of our charity, Dress for Success London (DFS London). For anyone who has visited us at Shepperton Road, Islington, you'll know there is never a dull moment here. Whether we're finding suits to suit, preparing candidates for the interview of a lifetime or simply discussing our fund raising programmes with donors, the work of DFS London is action-packed and, we believe, thoroughly worthwhile.

There's so much to tell you, I hardly know where to begin! Having operated in London for the past seven years, the growth of our organisation has been remarkable. We'd like to reflect on that progress in this inaugural issue of *news threads* by telling you a little bit

about who we are, how we started and what you can expect from DFS London. We'd also like to fill you in on some of our most successful programmes to date – our recent financial awards and a

hat-trick of publicity: an article in "The Times", a feature on BBC News 24 and an interview on ITV Lunchtime News. All this activity and it was still only April! On to the House of Lords in June where DFS London was the only charity featured at the launch of the MP's Guide to Domestic Violence. As our media presence grows, so does the interest and support for our organisation; find out how we are turning talk into triumph, with the help of our supporters and donors, to bring economic independence to disadvantaged women.

Perhaps you might be able to visit us soon to see and hear for yourself how DFS London is making a difference? In the meantime, read on to learn how DFS London is helping more and more women on their path to self-respect and self-sufficiency.

Kathy Seligman

welcome

"The growth of our organisation has been remarkable."





what we do

Dress for Success London promotes the economic independence of disadvantaged women by providing professional attire, a network of support and the career development tools to help women thrive in work and in life. Each Dress for Success London client receives one suit when she has a job interview and can return for a second suit when she finds work.

Dress for Success London serves clients by referral only, and women must have an interview scheduled before receiving clothing. Our clients come to us from a continually expanding and diverse group of homeless shelters, job training programmes, prison groups, educational institutions and domestic violence shelters, among many other organisations. Last year more than 50 referral partners sent women to Dress for Success for professional apparel and career development services.

On her initial visit a woman receives a suit appropriate for the industry in which she is interviewing and, if available, accessories. She is offered a mock interview wearing her new clothes. But more than the clothes and the interview training, the initial visit to DFS London provides a confidence boost that is second to none!

When a client leaves DFS London she is offered a chance to return - whatever the outcome of her job interview. If she finds a job, she returns to Dress for Success London for additional clothing, providing her with the foundation for a professional wardrobe. Almost more

importantly, if a woman finds she is still looking for a job following her initial interview, she is given the opportunity to come back to DFS London to talk over the interview experience and pick up more tips for the next interview.

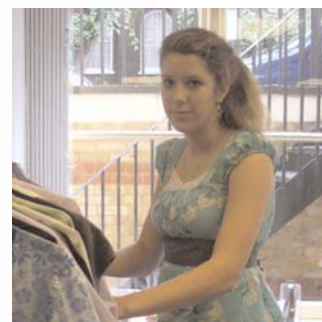
And that is not all. DFS London services are expanding. Thanks to generous grants from Awards for All and the Big Lottery Fund, DFS London is launching several new programmes and offers coaching on a wide variety of topics, including make-up and grooming, personal safety in the workplace and time management.

Dress for Success London was founded in 2000 as an independent UK registered charity. A licensee of the worldwide organisation, DFS London receives no financial contribution from Dress for Success Worldwide and relies solely on private support.

Did you know?

Dress for Success London sees clients between 10.00am and 4.00pm each weekday – and since April we've been in such demand we even open between 11.00am and 2.00pm every Saturday!

As a charity, Dress for Success London is completely dependant on the generosity of others. Such help comes in many different guises, whether from grants such as the recent allocation from the National Lottery Fund (see article page 5), donations from individuals or corporations, or indeed, in the shape of "hands-on" help from our volunteers. This summer we were delighted to welcome two 15-year old work experience volunteers, **Louisa Williams** and **Miranda Essex** to our offices in Shepperton Road. Here is what they had to say about the experience:



Miranda Essex



Louisa Williams

volunteer highlights

What was the most rewarding aspect of your work experience with Dress for Success London?

Louisa: I felt seeing the difference in the confidence of the women after their session at the Dress for Success London offices was hugely rewarding.

Miranda: We were most impressed by the fact that when clients arrived they looked nervous and often dejected, but after they were shown some respect, attention and given advice, it seemed they left feeling stronger in themselves.

What did you enjoy most about your time with Dress for Success London?

Louisa: The other volunteers really welcomed and involved us - we were given a lot of responsibility and did such a wide variety of activities. Each day was different and I always felt that we were actively contributing, whether we were working with clients or hanging up clothes.

Miranda: I most enjoyed interviewing the clients, hearing their stories and how DFS London had changed their lives. As most charities say that volunteers must be 16, I haven't been able to do any charity work up until now and personally, I found it very fulfilling.

I believe it is important for all of us to realise that disadvantaged people can be "close to home."

Why did you choose to undertake your work experience at Dress for Success London rather than perhaps a more "corporate" organisation?

Louisa: I was keen to work in a small organisation - I didn't want to be lost in a large company making tea all day! Dress for Success is such a valuable service and I liked the idea of helping a charitable organisation.

Miranda: We were allowed to get really involved with every aspect of Dress for Success London and found ourselves learning the workplace but in a relaxed atmosphere. I particularly enjoyed the fact that we were always kept busy, with no two days the same.

Would you like to return to work with Dress for Success in the future?

Louisa: I'd love to come back. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience and I felt that it really broadened my horizons.

Miranda: Definitely, I felt accepted and trusted and enjoyed every task I was given. I'd recommend Dress for Success London work experience to my friends because of the active role you can play in helping a charity that does such great work.

locked in to helping women

Following a successful career that combines a period with the Vogue magazine fashion room with her own retail operation and online business, entrepreneur Juliet Hughes-Hallett is still hungry for a challenge.

Approached by DFS London Chair, Kathy Seligman, at the beginning of 2007, Juliet has relished the opportunity to meet with DFS London clients and advise them for that important interview or fresh start in life. "The best moment is when a client looks in the mirror and the image of a professional woman, ready for a job interview, stares back; the smile on her face says it all. Our role is not just about finding the right suit, but helping them find the confidence," says Juliet.

Juliet's activities on behalf of DFS London, however, were about to change following a meeting with two visitors from Holloway Prison to the Shepperton Road premises. Part of a government funded scheme managed by the housing and homeless charity, Shelter, Holloway Prison staff are working on a project named Exodus to help offenders find

suitable employment and get back into the community. Each week one of six half-day voluntary sessions, run by different charities or volunteer groups, are held at the prison to offer vital advice and support to existing inmates who are due for imminent release. "The DFS London session is to encourage these women to visit when they are released so they can be dressed in clothes in which they feel both comfortable and fantastic," continues Juliet. "As a result they are prepared for their interview knowing they are dressed appropriately and feeling confident."

Juliet is working with another DFS London colleague on potentially rolling out the format of the prison programme to other establishments in the near future. "The wonderful thing about volunteering for DFS London is the

hugely rewarding outcome of spending an hour with these women. If we are doing our job properly they should leave not only with a new suit but with a more upbeat outlook."



spotlight on partners: Accenture

At present, DFS London works with a number of corporate partners who contribute to our progress either by fundraising monies or through donating their time and skills.

Global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, Accenture, has recently offered us support through their network of professionals and we've benefited from both strategic thinking and practical mentoring, collateral production and organisation skills. Diana Barea, manager at Accenture, is one volunteer who used her three-day corporate citizenship activity allowance from Accenture United Kingdom to get involved. In addition to her standard holidays, Diana benefits from three paid leave days in order to help a charity of her choice. One of her friends had previously donated suits to DFS London and Diana was impressed with the nature of the work as a means to encourage women to help themselves. Working in the DFS London offices,

Diana enjoyed a friendly, professional, and relaxed atmosphere that also gave her fresh insights into the work of a completely different sector than her usual client-facing projects for Accenture. "I could see how Accenture's business-like approach and problem-solving skills can really contribute and complement a charity," says Diana. Responsible for researching shoe retailers and manufacturers who could donate shoes, Diana also undertook extensive training and interview practice to help prepare some of the women who came for interview apparel. "It's not only about how the clothes make them feel, but also about being well prepared to present themselves to potential employers," says Diana.

Diana has continued to work with DFS London with activities such as helping to manage the Accenture suit and shoe drive in July 2007 that resulted in the donation of 80 boxes of clothing, shoes, bags and accessories collected for this very worthwhile cause. She concludes: "This is a great charity. I was amazed at the difference an interview outfit can make to a woman's confidence and, ultimately, to her chance of getting a job and an income. I'd encourage everyone to support Dress for Success and donate interview clothing or accessories – or their time."

>
accenture

MP's guide suits our clients



We're fully aware that our recycled suits might have their own story to tell and some recent contributions are no exception. June 2007 saw one particular donation that had been privy to the

hallowed leather benches of the House of Lords when Baroness Scotland (pictured left) donated a business suit and encouraged MPs and Peers to do likewise. The Baroness was participating in a 'suit drive' on behalf of DFS London to collect women's suits and accessories, especially shoes, in excellent condition, whilst launching Domestic Violence: an MP's Guide. The guide is aimed at helping MPs understand how they can best advise constituents experiencing domestic violence and outlines the Government's strategy in tackling domestic violence, how to recognise the symptoms of abuse and where survivors can get help. The Baroness also detailed the ways in which DFS London helps disadvantaged women move into employment and create a good working wardrobe.

A common disempowering tactic violent partners use is to destroy all the abused women's clothes. In addition, when many

survivors summon the courage to leave their partner they do so with only the clothes they stand in. Former Home Office Minister Baroness Scotland (now Attorney General) commented: "Everyone should be able to live without the fear of violence and abuse, but we know that one in four women will be affected by domestic violence during their lifetime."

The Government has already made significant changes to the way domestic violence is tackled-but recognises it can always do more. The published guide gives a clear route map to how MPs and Peers can best help their constituents and others who experience domestic violence to seek help. The Baroness concluded: "In donating one of my business suits to Dress for Success London it gives me immense pleasure that I will be personally helping to support a positive future for a survivor of domestic violence."

grant announcements

DFS London received a Big Lottery Fund grant of £334,571, one of seven grants totaling £1.7 million awarded to projects in London that give women a better chance of returning to work. Debbie Pippard, Big Lottery Fund Head of London Region said: "Women who want to return to the workplace face tremendous challenges. These projects will make a real difference to their opportunities to find work."

DFS London's Kathy Seligman recognised that women often suffer low self-esteem after many years without a job: "Not only are women intimidated by the need to learn new computer programmes or use the Internet, some women simply don't have a work outfit or their old clothes don't fit anymore and they can't afford replacements. The Big Lottery Fund grant goes a long way towards securing our work for the next five years and provides resources to train more volunteers to be mentors, organise support groups and maintain contact with women as they scale and surmount the challenges around returning to work."



LOTTERY FUNDED

welcome Eleanor!



Joining us from September 2007 is Eleanor Pryde, our new Business Operations Manager (pictured left). Eleanor was chosen from a strong field of candidates following her role as London Field Officer at Victim Support where she provided support and advice to London Victim Support charities on a range of

topics within charity management, including volunteer management, governance, trustee issues and change management. Prior to this role, Eleanor was a Senior Coordinator for the Witness Service for Victim Support and was responsible for managing staff, volunteers and budgets as well as building partnerships. A committed volunteer, Eleanor has spent time with Amnesty International, The Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre and the Prince's Trust Volunteers. Eleanor also has an MA (Hons) in Social Anthropology from the University of Edinburgh and an MSc in Global Politics from Birkbeck College, University of London.

partners

Dress for Success London works with many referral agencies and in this inaugural issue of *news threads* we caught up with three women from influential organisations:

Yvonne Springer, a Motivational Case Worker at St Giles Trust; **Marta Neto**, a volunteer Mentoring Coordinator for the Prison Advice & Care Trust and **Isabel Welsh**, a Prison Officer at Holloway Prison.

news threads (NT): Tell us how you came to hear about DFS London?

Yvonne: I came across DFS London when I worked for Patchwork Housing and continued the relationship when I moved to the St Giles Trust.

Marta: I first heard about you through Exodus (funded by the European Social Fund) which is a pilot scheme for short-term offenders aimed at engaging them in meaningful activities.

Isabel: I became aware of DFS London via 'Follow Change' a motivational programme in Holloway Prison.

NT: What value do you believe DFS London gives to the women you refer?

Yvonne: Definitely confidence and self esteem. Women leave DFS London holding their heads up high and have given us feedback that the organisation offers a non-judgemental service where the focus is 100 per cent on the client.

Marta: It is the first time many of the women have had the opportunity to benefit from a luxury service and luxury

products. The service is one-to-one. The women think they are going to a charity shop and then they come here and can't believe their luck.

NT: What success stories can you share with us about clients who visit DFS London?

Yvonne: There are so many success stories but the one particular success that pops to mind is about one woman who came to DFS London and now works full-time in a very responsible position at the St Giles Trust.

Isabel: I think it's worth saying, the women that come here are so fortunate. Men have nowhere like DFS London to go!

St Giles Trust helps disadvantaged offenders, vulnerable homeless and at risk people to build independent and successful lives which contribute to their communities. They provide health facilities, support in the community, education and training.

The Prison Advice & Care Trust (PACT) is an independent charity which supports people affected by imprisonment. They work with children and families of prisoners, and with prisoners inside and on release.

why volunteer?

As we saw in the Spotlight on Partners earlier, members from the marketing teams of corporate sponsor Accenture have found enormous satisfaction in offering volunteer services to Dress for Success London. Accenture's Sarah Thomas, submitted this entry for Bill Clinton's book, "Giving," published in the United States in September 2007: "Whatever bad day I think I am having, the reality is that I live a charmed life: a loving family, good job, roof over my head and money in the bank. Reaching a monumental point in my career last year, and not feeling the happiness I thought it would bring, made me realise there must be more to life than the corporate ladder. Volunteering at Dress for Success London has given me my perspective back and some balance in my life.

Whoever you are, and from whatever background, it only takes five seconds for other people to make a judgement about you. Dress for Success is about levelling the playing field. It doesn't patronise but enables the women it helps to get their lives back on track. Jesse Jackson once said, "You should never look down on someone unless you are helping them up." Dress for Success London gives the women it helps that step up. I like the fact the charity stands for equality for all – everyone being judged on their abilities and not their appearance – and that I can help a few women who have not had the opportunities in life that I have."

don't miss!

exclusive offers, champagne and canapés from 8.00pm to 10.00pm on Wednesday, 26th September 2007. We're grateful to Harvey Nichols for donating 10 percent of their sales on this particular evening directly to DFS London. To find out more, e-mail london@dressforsuccess.org by Friday, 21st September or telephone 020 7288 1770.

DFS London is getting together with Bobbi Brown Cosmetics, Chantelle and Talbots on Wednesday, 28th November 2007 for a fashion show, bra fitting and mini makeover session. Let us know if you can be there 7.00pm at Talbot's flagship store, 115 Regent Street, W1 (near Piccadilly Circus) via e-mail london@dressforsuccess.org or telephone 020 7288 1770 for more details.

DFS London temporarily moves to Knightsbridge in September when we spend an evening at Harvey Nichols, SW1. With an opportunity for fashion seekers to select from the HN winter collection in style, buyers can benefit from

Telephone

020
7288
1770

for more
information



blushing blog

We like to hear from everyone who either works with us or visits us and find the feedback from the women who come to Shepperton Road particularly heart-warming. Here are just a few of their thoughts on what Dress for Success London did for them:

"I really felt pampered today. Everything worked; people were approachable, caring, friendly-and they have such good taste! Thank you."

"What you do here really helps people to get back to work and be successful."

"An excellent service that provides women with the opportunity to pursue their dreams. Thanks very much and keep up the great work."

Behind the thanks, however, there are the real stories of hardship and even despair that leads clients to our Shepperton doors. Dress for Success London hopes to offer such women more than a suit, but a window into a new lifestyle. "I had experienced an overwhelming chain of traumatic life events that included childhood sexual abuse, drug use and, ultimately, serving a three to six year prison sentence," says Zoe, a Dress for Success client. "On leaving prison I desperately wanted to obtain employment but had no resources behind me." Zoe picked out her first interview suit in a classic green-the same colour as the prison uniform she had been wearing for months before. She is now a counsellor with a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre. "Dress for Success not only helped me to obtain employment but also to retain my dignity and become a source of inspiration for others."

our helping hands

We're grateful for all the contributions we receive, but here is the latest list of grants and corporate donations received since January 2007:

- Awards for All, The National Lottery Fund
- Big Lottery Fund, The National Lottery Fund
- Bobbi Brown Cosmetics
- Enterprise Rent-A-Car
- Islington Community Chest
- John Lyon's Charity
- Lloyds/TSB Foundation for England and Wales
- The Ian Mactaggart Trust
- The Mercers' Company
- Share Gift

suit drive

Many of our partners kindly held suit drives for our benefit in 2007. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated - and encourage you to let us know if you may be interested in running such a drive. Suit drives held in the first six months of 2007 include:

- Accenture
- Christian & Timbers
- Citigroup Finance
- The Crown Prosecution Service
- Duane Morris
- The Home Office
- JP Morgan
- Junior League of London
- Lehman Brothers
- McGrigors

Two further suit drives are taking place in October:

- Cargill
- Goldman Sachs

we rely on you

If you would like to make a donation to Dress for Success London visit our website at www.dressforsuccess.org/london and select the word "Donations" in the right hand sidebar. We are grateful for all donations, whether it's your suits, your time or your cheques!

about

Dress for Success

Dress for Success London promotes the economic independence of disadvantaged women by providing professional attire, a network of support and the career development tools to help women thrive in work and in life. We work with a diverse group of homeless shelters, job training programmes, prison groups, educational institutions and domestic violence shelters, as well as partnering with many other corporate organisations. Independent UK-registered charity Dress for Success London is a licensee of Dress for Success Worldwide and relies on private support. The worldwide organization was founded by Nancy Lublin in 1996. For more information visit www.dressforsuccess.org/london.

If you would like to know more about Dress for Success London, or you would like to recommend a colleague to be added to our mailing list, please contact us at: london@dressforsuccess.org or telephone 0207 288 1770.



Our grateful thanks to Accenture for the production of this first issue of *news threads* and to Accenture suppliers Sarah Bird of Virgo Marketing Limited and Tina Senior from Senior Associates Marketing Limited.