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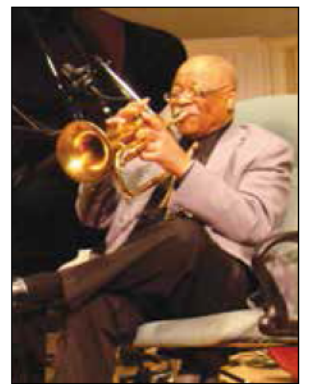
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'City of Roses'



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Established in 1970  
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# Dress for Success

## New diversity focus for group helping women

BY OLIVIA OLIVIA  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A local chapter of a non-profit that promotes economic independence for women from all walks of life welcomes a new leader who is eager to help bring diversity to the organization. Shari Dunn, the newest executive director for Portland's Dress for Success program, has background in both family law and journalism, and says she is ecstatic to bring her experience in media and helping women in their times of need to the non-profit organization based in northeast Portland.

Dunn hails from Milwaukie, Wisc. but has lived across the United States and even in London. She graduated from the Northwestern University School of Law in Chicago after getting her undergraduate degree in History of Philosophy at Marquette University in Wisconsin. Despite her love of working for local news stations and helping women get through divorces as an attorney, Dunn says she was ready for a change.

She was visiting Portland on a regular basis to visit local friends and family when someone referred her to the job, and it was a great fit, she says, "I was just so impressed, and I really was impressed for potential for growth and the work that they're doing."

Dress for Success was also going through changes and was in need of a new executive director. Changing community needs meant that a new leader would have to be sensitive to how women arrived and what their needs were.

"The door with which they step is the dressing issue, but once they step through the door, then we are able to help them with all these other services," Dunn says. "Many of the women alumni are in many positions of power across the area. Now we have women who helps run Kroger's; they are nurses; they are following their dreams; but for many of them it began by just looking for the clothes."

Over 18,000 women throughout the Oregon and Washington have used the group's services since Dress for Success arrived in



PHOTO BY OLIVIA OLIVIA/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Shari Dunn, who used to work as a divorce attorney and a news anchor, puts her experience to work as the new executive director of Portland's Dress for Success office.

the area in 1999. The organization helps get low-income women professional clothes for interviews, but it also offers a variety of other services, like job training or interview preparation.

Dress for Success offers classes, seminars with community leaders and employers, an intensive job search program, and even mentorships with other women. One of the most successful programs, Help One Person Excel (HOPE), is a job retention

program designed to educate and support newly-employed women through their first 90 days of employment, aiming to ease the transition to a new job and ensure employment success.

Women also are invited to participate in the organization's Professional Women's Group, a job retention program dedicated to helping women stay employed by providing ongoing support and resources that help clients achieve self-defined success in

their careers and in their broader lives.

"At this moment, the Portland mentorship program has shown a 100 percent success rate in keeping local women employed through their first 90 days of new jobs," explained Dunn.

Dunn knows that there are many challenges ahead as Portland's demographics change.

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