WELCOME SPEECH

FOR

PAT SIMMOMS

Hello everyone!! I want to thank all of you for attending this year’s Dress For Success **Step Up To Success** Fashion Show and Auction. Your presence and participation here means more to our clients than you’ll ever know…but if you’d **LIKE** to know more, believe me, we’ll be happy to tell you all about the organization, its mission, the incredible work done right here in Tulsa, and the growing and significant impact we are having on the community, the Tulsa area and beyond. Thanks to events like this and the tireless support of our staff, volunteers and participation from **YOU,** we are able to serve more and more women each year. Dress for Success is a worldwide non-profit organization that serves disadvantaged women by providing business attire and a network of support and career development tools to encourage women to thrive in work and in life. We have a fantastic evening planned for tonight and it’s all to celebrate this very worthy cause. We have a very exciting fashion show presented by Dillard’s, and yes, we’ll see executives from our area-both women **AND** men, as they show us what it means and how it feels to present a confident and beautifully styled persona. We’ll hear a stimulating and thought provoking keynote speech from Myers Barnes, a man who is known for his proven success and positive message to those in the business world. Myers is from the great state of North Carolina, and for those who remember its history, Kitty Hawk, where Myers hails from, has proven to be fertile turf for innovative ground breaking ideas, so I **know** we’re in for a treat! And by the way, Myers’ speech heralds a milestone-he is the **first male** to offer a keynote address at this event!! We have some really spectacular items in our silent auction and for those of you that have attended Dress For Success events in the past, you might think you have an idea of what’s to come, but just wait! I have two words for all of you…**BIDDING**. **WAR**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Tonight our evening is inspired by the novel, “The Great Gatsby.” The “Jazz Age” was a time that was ripe with self-expression that took much of its form from the way people presented themselves. It was a time when people were experiencing a new sort of revolution and the styles and trends of the times demonstrated a new ease and elegance. It was the beginning of the age of the woman as a confident, individual career person, and it’s an era that directly and indirectly inspires each one of us. It was F. Scott Fitzgerald who said, “Vitality shows in not only the ability to persist but the **ability to start over**.” Invention and reinvention. Persistence, resilience, self-respect. These are the traits we honor in our clients here at Dress For Success and each year, thanks to the generosity of people like you, we are able to do more and more to support the clients we serve. These women come from all walks of life. They have demonstrated the ability to persist and the willingness to start over. Their vitality is an inspiration and it is an honor to work with them and support them in ways they hadn’t yet dreamed of.

I remember several years ago, I was proud to declare that Dress For Success was growing by leaps and bounds. I remember when I shared that we had 102 affiliates world wide, and then I got to say we had 110. This year, I am even more proud to tell you that number is up to **one hundred and twenty seven** places around the world that support and wardrobe women as they find their way with confidence and self-respect into the workforce. This year alone, our Tulsa office and boutique volunteers worked with donated resources and the “styling magic” of our volunteers to outfit over 1500 women in the Tulsa area. As our outreach has grown so have our resources. We offer support programs like the Growing Places Network, thanks to the astounding generosity of Walmart, and the Professional Women’s Group, both designed to educate, empower, and prepare our clients for today’s modern workforce challenges. All of this growth is great, but keep this in mind: Dress for Success Tulsa is the only affiliate office in the entire state of Oklahoma. We serve a clientele that stretches from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. We have a tremendous challenge. We do whatever we can to outfit and inspire the women who rely on us as they find their way back to work. Remember that **NONE** of this would be possible without **your** generosity. The Dalai Lama said, “With realization of one’s own potential and self-confidence in one’s ability, one can build a better world.” At Dress For Success we work with women to give them a second chance at success-for them, their children, and their communities. Later tonight, you’ll have an opportunity to hear from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. She is one of our clients and I think you’ll agree that her words and outlook are the embodiment of our mission.

None of this work would be possible without our dedicated staff and our incredibly devoted volunteers. The work that we accomplish is done with a skeleton staff and every minute of time we get from our volunteers is golden. Please remember also that there are never any fees charged to our clients, (**If you want to make a little joke you can say**) and to paraphrase Blanche du Bois, “I’ve always relied on the **generosity** of strangers.” We rely on the generosity of friends too!! (**Wait for the laugh**). I want to acknowledge some people that have endlessly given of themselves and their time and commitment. To our Board, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, what can I say? Your guidance insures our growth. To our Executive Director, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, you have **1500** reasons to be very, very proud…. and that was just **THIS** year!! To our program coordinator, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, if anyone wants to know where the “magic” starts and who makes it happen, look no further!! And to all of our volunteers, you are truly the heart and soul of this group. We thank you for every minute of your time and we know that what you give comes back **100 fold** when you see your clients experience true personal success.

I am about to introduce Chera Kimiko, our wonderful “**Madame** of Ceremonies” for this evening’s festivities, but before I yield the microphone, I want you to remember the women that we serve. Please have a great time and think of the women in **YOUR** life who are blessed enough to have what they need to maintain their professional and personal lives and in their honor bid, pledge, donate, volunteer. The world will ultimately be a much better place for your kind and generous contribution! Thank you all and Chera, it’s your turn!