**WELCOME SPEECH**

**FOR**

**PAT SIMMONS**

Hello everyone!!! Welcome to this year’s fantastic event, “Purses and Poodle Skirts.” While every year we gather together to have a great time and do some amazing things at our fundraisers, I truly believe this year might be the most fun of all… you might even say….as a nod to our latest theme, this is truly a **FULL CIRCLE [SKIRT] MOMENT**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). This year, we honor the “sock hopper” that lives within each one of us…. We’ve dolled ourselves up…. We’ve made sure the wings on our eyeliner match…. from eye to eye…. If you know what I mean… it’s not so easy to get them to match…. How did those kids do it back in the day??? We’ve blown up our “bouffants” and we’ve puffed up our ponytails… (**do you want to add the expression**)…Let’s not forget the wise person who once said, “The higher the hair, the closer to God.” (**And wait for the laugh**) … We’ve also perked up our petticoats…. and **MOST IMPORTANTLY**… we’ve proudly primped in our **PERFECT** poodle skirts, all with the intention of making **Bid, Rattle, and Roll** the **GINCHIEST**, grooviest, most successful fundraiser ever!!! I’d like to take a moment to thank my two co-chairs, Patti Freeman and Terri Wasinger. Ladies, if there were ever two people to put a “bounce in my flounce,” it’s you!!! It’s been a marvelous experience as we, and our volunteers and sponsors “made the magic” happen again!

Speaking of sponsors, we wouldn’t be here without the generosity and great will of those that saw to it this year’s event would be so impressive and effective. (**Add acknowledgments here**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

To our Executive Director, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, thank you for your wisdom and leadership. You guide by example and the clients that come in to select their work wardrobes are indeed fortunate to have you as a reference point … you are a worthy guiding light. To our advisory board, your wisdom and experience never fail to guide us to new levels of effectiveness. To our volunteers and our donors, what can I say? Your incredible ability to share AND care takes us to new heights every year, at each successive and SUCCESSFUL event. It’s really thrilling to be a part of such a great team.

Yes. Full circle moments…. Full **circle skirt** moments this year… all in celebration of the great work we do and the women we serve thanks to the generosity and dedication of all of you, here at Dress for Success Tulsa. I have personally been involved for \_\_\_\_\_\_ years. Many of you know that I’ve served in many capacities, most recently as the President of this chapter. I’ve been there to witness the outreach and impact this fine group of people have leveraged for those women in our communities who are eager for a second, third, maybe fourth chance at having a meaningful, productive life. While tonight we may dress up to have a little bit of fun, every element of the outfits we wear is an expression of our commitment to make sure that our neighbors have just as much choice and chance to build themselves as we have had to bring this theme to life. Ultimately, we can see that clothing is armor …. In all sorts of ways…. It protects us from the elements.. it offers a glimpse into the past…. Yes…. Even and **ESPECIALLY** poodle skirts do this!!! And it provides professional presentation to our clients. Our efforts with wardrobe, training, and encouragement, allow women to regain a sense of pride…. The feeling that they too, can compete in an arena in which they can grow their skills, inspire their friends and families, and maybe even join in with us to encourage others to be inspired by their commitment to themselves.

Last year, we raised almost $100,000.00! I am confident that will go down in the record books as being wonderful…. And **BESTED**, by this year’s stellar crop of merchandise…. New, previously loved, and special, rare vintage pieces are poised and ready to be won by you lucky women… Let’s see what we can do to make this the best auction **EVER**!!

It was Coco Chanel who said, “Fashion changes but style endures.” I’d like to go Coco one better… “Fashion changes, style endures, and generosity, compassion, and partnership in service are the greatest gifts we can share!!! Thank you all!!