

ERIN GOLDFARB

CO-FOUNDER

DRESS FOR SUCCESS FRESNO

What led you to co-found Dress for Success Fresno?

Prior to moving to Fresno, I had donated clothing to another Dress for Success located in California. After moving to Fresno and accumulating enough professional clothing to donate, I was surprised to find there was no affiliate located here. After speaking with other women who also had professional clothing to donate, I decided to call the headquarters of Dress for Success (called Dress for Success Worldwide), and inquire about why there wasn't a Fresno location. The representative from Dress for Success Worldwide explained to me that affiliates in each city were actually standalone not-for-profits started by community members, but were supported by Worldwide by allowing the affiliate to use their programs, logo, branding, intranet and technology. She told me that they had actually identified Fresno as an area that would benefit from a Dress for Success and asked right there and then if I would like to begin the process to apply to become an affiliate! While I hadn't planned on taking on a project as big as starting Dress for Success Fresno, I told her to send me the paperwork and I'd take a look at it. The first part of the application (called Phase I) was a two page application that asked for information about myself and my community (Fresno). I remember filling it out, still unsure as to whether or not I was actually going to apply, and I started on the community information section. While I was aware Fresno had its challenges, I had no idea that our unemployment percentage rate and percentage rate of population living below the poverty line were so high. While these fluctuate, they were approximately 11.1% and 28.9%, respectively, at the time of application. Most of those living below the poverty line are women and children. Actually seeing those numbers on paper was a major turning point for me — they really opened my eyes to the fact that women were struggling just a few miles away and needed help. While I can't solve everyone's problems, I knew that I could help and make a difference in many of our local women and children's lives. So I said yes to Dress for Success Worldwide, and I was approved to start the Dress for Success Fresno affiliate in February of 2016.

How important is dress when it comes to self-confidence and landing a job?

Studies show you have less than a minute to make a positive first impression when you meet someone. While first impressions are made up of many small clues, appearance is always high on the list of what makes up a first impression. Dressing appropriately for a job interview sends a positive message, which in turn, gives the candidate greater confidence in themselves. As the partner in charge of personnel at my CPA firm, Baker Peterson Franklin, I've interviewed countless professional men and women. My goal is to get to know them and to see if they would be a good fit at our firm. When candidates are confident, it shows, and they are better able to tell me about themselves and their talents. At Dress for Success Fresno, our vision is to help prepare our clients, on the inside and out, for interviews and ultimately the workforce. We will provide them with the attire needed for the interview, but also with interview tips, résumé review and, time permitting, mock interviews. By making sure our clients are well prepared for their interview, their self-confidence can shine through.

How has the community reacted to this effort?

The community has been extremely supportive. I have been amazed by the generosity of my firm, family, clients and friends. As individuals who have all had to start somewhere, we all can relate to the nerves and anxiety of a first job interview or trying to make a good impression at work. The cause is very personal and relatable. So many women have donated clothing already, it is almost overwhelming. We have a great start to our clothing inventory, now we just need to secure a location for our boutique! Our vision for Dress for Success Fresno is to create a boutique-like environment that feels like a fancy closet. We aim to create a location that women are excited to visit and feel like they are being treated with respect.

How can the business community help this cause?

Although Dress for Success is a worldwide organization, the Fresno affiliate is still in the start-up phase. Therefore, our biggest need right now is getting the organization launched and our doors open. We have an incredible start-



What we do: Dress for Success Fresno is an affiliate of an international not-for-profit organization that empowers women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire and the development tools to help women thrive in work and in life.

Education: Bachelor's degree in economics, emphasis in accounting, UC Santa Barbara.

Age: 39

Family: Husband, Adam, and two children, Ella and Evan.

up committee working hard to make this happen, but could always use more volunteers. Our focus right now is locating and setting up a space from which we can serve our clients. However, suiting our clients is just the beginning. We have plans to include a career center within our boutique, which will include computers, printers, and books available to our clients to help them prepare for their interviews. Any help from the business community in securing any of these items would be greatly appreciated.

How do you fit Dress for Success into your job as a partner with Baker Peterson Franklin?

Baker Peterson Franklin has a long history of giving back to our community through contributions, leadership and volunteer efforts. When I approached my partner group about launching a local affiliate of Dress for Success, they were on board 100%. Baker Peterson Franklin is a founding sponsor and several employees have volunteered their own time and energy to make Dress for Success Fresno a reality. Because we are a professional organization that has helped launch careers for so many women, supporting the mission of Dress for Success was an easy fit.

What was your very first job and what did you learn from it?

As soon as I was old enough to work (age 16), I walked down the street and got a job as a hostess at the local restaurant in my neighborhood. I had a great experience overall, but working with the public can be challenging at times! I would say that the most valuable lesson I learned is to always treat people as you would want to be treated, and in my case that is to treat everyone with respect and kindness.

What are your roots in the Central Valley?

I grew up in Southern California but moved to Fresno in 2005, just after I got engaged to my husband, Adam. I like to tell people I moved to Fresno for love, but stayed for the wonderful people and lack of freeway traffic!

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I love to travel, read, swim, and hike — all with friends and family of course!