

Dressing for success



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UNITED WAY

When you're looking for a job, a good first impression can mean everything.

From the clothes you wear to the way you style your hair, your whole appearance can make an impact when you're going for a job interview.

"The way you are perceived by others impacts the opportunities that come to you," says Michelle Fulowka of the Making Changes Association.

Michelle should know — she is the program manager for Walk-In Closet.

Walk-In Closet, funded by United Way, provides women who are facing financial barriers free outfits, cosmetics and accessories that are interview- and work-appropriate.

"Some of the women who come to see us are living in shelters and many are new immigrants. They don't have the money to buy new clothes so they can look good for a job interview," says Michelle.

"When I came to Canada, I gained some weight," says Maryam, who arrived seven months ago from Iran.

As a new immigrant, she has been under a lot of financial stress and is still looking for a job.

"I can't afford to buy a new outfit, but my clothes do not fit me anymore. I heard about Walk-In Closet through a program at Bow Valley College and decided to book an appointment," she says.

Walk-In Closet has more than 1,000 women, just like Maryam, walk through its doors each year.

"Some women may not know what is expected when it comes to appropriate business attire and Canadian corporate culture. We teach them how to dress for success," says Michelle.

When people dress well, they feel more confident, it's a fact

MICHELLE FULOWKA

had one woman who was looking for a job at a hotel and they would not hire her for any position. After she met with us, she went back to the same hotel and was hired for a management position. It's not just about clothes, it's giving these women a boost to their self esteem," she says.

And it seems to be working.

Walk-In Closet surveyed almost all of the women that came through its doors in 2008 and



Courtesy, United

Maryam, who came to Canada from Iran seven months ago, models an outfit she received from the Walk-In Closet program

found 87 per cent had found employment, with 66 per cent of those jobs full-time.

Maryam is hoping the same happen to her. She's worked as a consultant at Walk-In Closet and now has a nice new suit in wardrobe.

"I thought the whole experience was a lot of fun. I have a lot more confidence now in the way I look and feel. I know it's only a matter of time before I find the market job I am looking for."

For more information on the Walk-In Closet program, visit www.makingchangesassociation.ca