

Dress for Success founder speaks on empowering low-income women

by HEIDI BING
News Editor

Nancy Lublin, founder of the national non-profit organization Dress for Success, believes the most important offering society can give struggling women is the confidence to succeed. The 28-year-old Oxford University graduate is the founder and executive director of a nation-wide agency that provides professional clothes to low-income women seeking employment.

"I love knowing that every morning when I get up I'm doing something that's going to affect someone else. I'm going to be giving a woman the greatest gift any body can give her, and that is confidence," Lublin said.

Lublin served as keynote speaker for the university's celebration of women's history month. The department of women's studies and the dean of students office sponsored Lublin's lecture last Wednesday night in Bryan Auditorium where Lublin spoke about her organization and the importance of providing equal opportunity to all women.

Lublin founded Dress for Success four years ago when she was a law student in New York City. The initial funding for the program came from a \$5,000 inheritance Lublin received from her

great-grandfather, an immigrant.

"I knew I didn't want to use the check for anything materialistic," Lublin said. "I knew I wanted to honor [my great-grandfather] by giving back and creating this program. I wanted to create a program that would help low-income women make killer first impressions."

Since its creation, Dress for Success has opened in more than 50 cities around the world including Charlotte, N.C., and London.

Women are referred to the agency by organizations such as homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, and job training programs. Each Dress for Success client receives one suit when she has an interview and a second suit when she gets the job.

Lublin said there is a "catch 22" involved in presenting oneself for job interviews. She said a woman has to have the appropriate outfit to get the job, but she can not afford that outfit until she has the job.

Lublin feels that "classism" is rampant in our country and appearance often determines class. Therefore, she said it is vital that low-income women are provided clothes they will be judged fairly wearing.

"People are judged the moment you meet them and it is based on their clothing. You look at someone and decide

where they fall on the totem pole of life," she said. "This suit is a kind of uniform that you have to wear if you're going to play the game and be able to compete on the same playing field."

Dress for Success has now helped over 20,000 women prepare for job interviews. The organization has also founded the Professional Women's Group, which helps these women after they begin their careers. Lublin said these women often encounter new problems, notably issues of childcare and transportation, once they begin their job.

Experts often speak to these groups on issues such as filling out tax forms, and the group allows these women to network with one another. Another important component of the Professional Women's Group is it offers the possibility of relocation as groups in various cities share information on job opportunities.

Wednesday afternoon, Lublin met with fifteen women from public agencies in Wilmington. The group discussed the possibility of bringing a program like Dress for Success to Wilmington.

"It would be something really important to Wilmington if we could begin to empower the poor and low-income women," said history professor Kathleen Berkeley.

Several other campus organizations will be sponsoring events in celebration of Women's History Month.

Tonight at 7:30, Berkeley will be at Barnes and Noble, signing copies of her book "Women's Liberation Movement in America."

Women's Studies will be sponsoring a program titled "Myths that Main" in Cameron Auditorium from 7-9 p.m. tomorrow night.

The Activities and Leadership Center will sponsor a "Women In Politics Panel" on Monday at 7 p.m. in the Center Stage Café. The presentation will feature a discussion by panelists including city council members Laura Padgett and Sandra Spalding-Hughs, school board representative Debbie Keck, and Betty Medlin, mayor of Kure Beach.

The college of arts and sciences will sponsor a "Women in Education" teleconference. Monday through Wednesday of next week in Kenan Auditorium. Tuesday the counseling center will sponsor a program titled "Moving Beyond Disordered Eating: Healing Our Relationships with Body and Food" in the Glassroom of the University Union for 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.

For more information on any of these events, contact the Dean of Students office at 962-3119.

Phi Eta Sigma presents award to Freshman with highest GPA

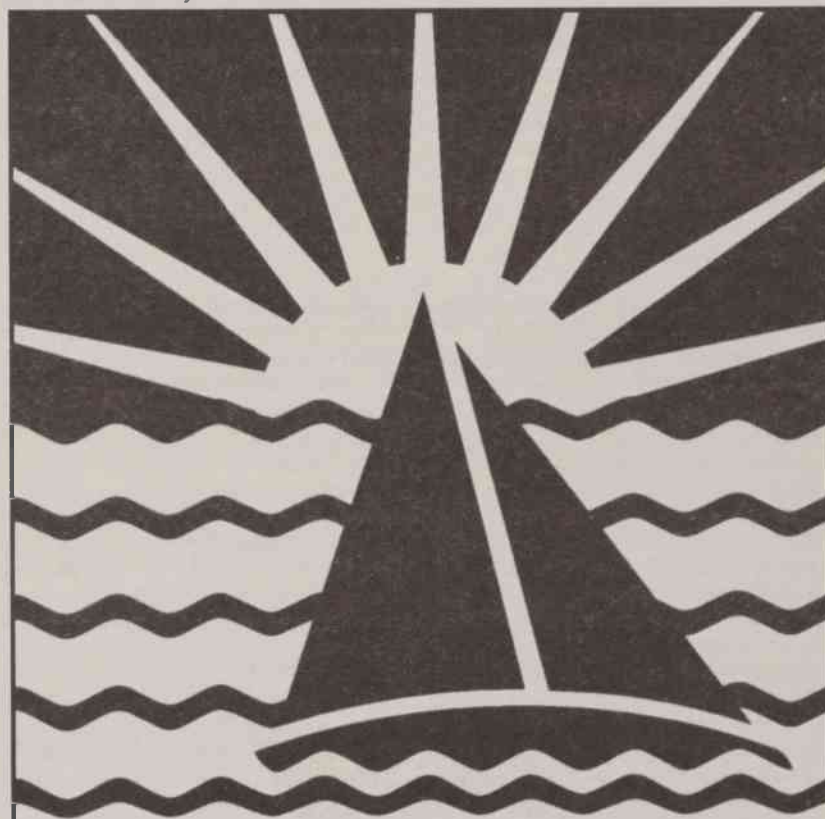


In a ceremony on Monday, Feb. 20, the Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society presented an award to the UNCW freshman with the highest grade point average (GPA). David Rutledge achieved a perfect 4.0 GPA while carrying 19 hours of course study. Rutledge is a pre-law major.

"We presented David with a certificate and a Black Law's Dictionary which all pre-law majors need to help them study," said Dr. Lee Johnson, the society's faculty advisor.

The Phi Eta Sigma was the first campus-wide honor society at UNCW. Membership is open to any freshman who achieves a 3.5 GPA or above while carrying thirty hours their freshman year.

"David is a kid who can really think and we prize students who succeed academically," Johnson said.



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