



Participants in the I Rock My Curves The Best! Fashion Show close out the show, held in December.



The show includes choreographed dance numbers by the models as they show off their designs.

Women love themselves, and their curves, through fashion

BY CHANEL DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE

The I Rock My Curves The Best! movement has taken over the Triad with women embracing their size and shunning the traditional modeling size.

The movement is one designed to "empower, uplift, celebrate and embrace women with curves" and its mission is to "change the perception about curves promoting self-love and confidence," according to the website.

"I Rock My Curves birthed from a fashion show that we did last September in Greensboro. I had wanted to do something to empower the plus size women in the area but I was dragging my feet because I wasn't sure how people would respond and I felt like I didn't have the support I needed," said Kenyatta Johnson, founder and executive director. "There are plus movements all over but it was needed here. I felt like in this area, in the Triad and North Carolina, there weren't a lot of positive things centered around and for the curvy community."

Eventually, though, she would pick up the phone and make some calls, surprising herself with the response and feedback.

"It was only supposed to be that one

show. Instead, we had an extremely large casting, two actually, that I wasn't prepared for," she said.

The results ... 40 plus-sized models from different backgrounds who had never modeled before but were ready to strut all of their curves on the runway. The runway also brought a sense of purpose and camaraderie to these women who need a lift in self-esteem and or a push to empower.

"From that developed these relationships and people bonding. The more we spent time with these women, the more that we heard that women needed this and didn't know where to get it," Ingram said. "It turned into a sisterhood and then a movement, because before I knew it the word was traveling faster than I could keep up with."

Winston-Salem Resident Ollie Green said that she is proud of Johnson and thinks the movement is a great thing.

"This is an outlet for women to get together and focus on encouraging one another," she said. "It's very positive. Women like us have curves. Some people can take that as fat and some people can take that as overweight, but we love ourselves. No matter what we look like or what size we are, we love each other. This is important because it gives an outlet to other women who may not feel like they're

beautiful, important or sexy."

Johnson said that from that, she began receiving emails and phone calls from outside of Greensboro.

"It became much bigger than I ever thought it would be," she said.

The Fayetteville native wears many hats, including being a makeup artist, life coach and motivational speaker. She said that growing up she was picked on by children for her weight.

"When I was growing up, I didn't know I was different until I went to school. You know how kids are overly mean. If something doesn't look like you it looks different or it looks odd, people are afraid of it or they mock it," she said. "I was very confident, even as a child, because I had great parents. My father was always telling me how beautiful I was, he was always reaffirming me and loving on me."

She would go on to graduate from Livingstone College and Howard University, before realizing that she was born to help others. Which is exactly what she is doing by helping to allow women to rock their curves, just the way they are.

"The emails never stop, the inbox is never empty and I feel like I'm constantly counseling somebody. It never ends, and I love the work and the opportunity for ministry that has come from this," she said.

"This is not Kenyatta but a God thing. I just happen to be the vessel that he ministers in to do this work."

Green said that she has enjoyed seeing the positive impact it has had on other women.

"I'm an encourager. I love to see people grow and see them happy. That's my gratification. We have a large number of women from all around the Triad, all states and all ethnicities," she said. "If you are confident, curvy, love yourself and others, and love fashion, I would recommend you join I Rock My Curves."

Since its conception in September 2014, IRMC has been highlighted on TLC's reality TV show "My Big Fat Fab Life", IRMC has produced two fashion shows in N.C., mentors young girls, works with victims of domestic violence and supports homeless Veterans.

Right now, Johnson said that she is hoping to be a community-based organization that's a nonprofit.

"Now it's a matter of getting from where we are now to getting the funds so we can continue to go," she said. "I would love to get grants and provide services to all women who may need help."

For more information or to join, visit www.irockmycurvesthebest.com.

Salem College students to hold walk to raise awareness of suicide

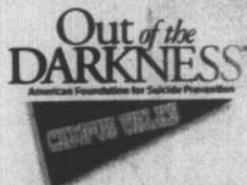
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Students, staff and the surrounding community are preparing to bring awareness to suicide and its causes.

The Salem College Out of the Darkness Campus Walk will be held on Saturday, May 2 with registration beginning at 8 a.m. The walk will begin at 601 S. Church St. and is expected to last until noon.

"This is the first time that Salem College has done a walk dedicated to suicide prevention," said Kimya N. Dennis, assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Studies and the faculty organizer of the event. "This is important because mental health has impacted any human who has ever existed. That includes suicide and self-harming behavior."

So far the school has raised \$945 dollars of its \$3,000 goal. The funds go toward the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention so that it can invest in new research, create educational programs, advocate for public policy and support survivors of suicide loss.



Dennis said that the group wants to get rid of the shame and secrecy of suicide and mental illness.

The walk has been student-led and organized. Dennis called the organization stage a very good experience that could possibly turn into an annual event. There will be entertainment, food and participants are encouraged to walk as many times as they like. The student center will be open for those who would need to sit inside.

"We want to encourage people to discuss the topics of suicide and self-harming behaviors. People harm themselves for different reasons. Sometimes we find different patterns as to why it tends to occur," Dennis said. "Overall there can be different issues in why people tend to take their own life."

Dennis also said that it is a great

chance for the group to shine light on mental illness and suicides in ethnic minorities of the community.

"African-Americans and people of the African diaspora in general have a tendency to believe that mental health is not an issue of importance, and that suicide is something that black folk don't do. The common phrase is that black people don't commit suicide," Dennis said.

The faculty member said that is when she reminds those individuals about the suicide of Don Cornelius.

"A lot of people know those who have thought about or attempted suicide. We want to make people more comfortable about the topic, and that includes looking at religion and how a lot of black people feel like being religious means that they can't care about these topics," she said. "I tell people 'Even if your praying on it, there is still resources that you need to utilize.'"

For more information about the event, visit <http://afsp.donordrive.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=donorDrive.event&eventID=3416>.

Be the Difference.
Walk to Fight Suicide

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR
Suicide Prevention

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"Overall there can be different issues in why people tend to take their own life."

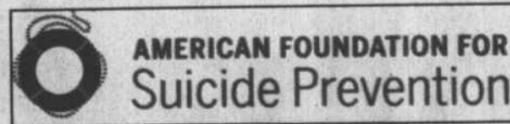
-Kimya N. Dennis

If you participate

Online registration closes at noon the Friday (May 1) before the walk. Anyone who would like to participate in the walk can register in person at 8 a.m. until the walk begins at 9 a.m. Donations will be accepted until June 30.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is the leader in the fight against suicide. They fund research, offer educational program, advocate for public policy, and support those affected by suicide. Find the North Carolina chapter at <http://www.afsp.org/local-chapters/local-chapters-listed-by-state/north-carolina/afsp-north-carolina>.

If you are in a crisis or are thinking about suicide, call 1-800-273-8255.



New alliance dedicated to increasing diversity in the N.C. health workforce

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Former HHS Secretary and Chairman of The Sullivan Alliance to Transform the Health Professions, Louis W. Sullivan, M.D. met with senior officials from North Carolina colleges, universities, statewide organizations, as well as state and local health agencies to formally create a statewide alliance to increase minority representation in the health professions.

This new academic and state agency partnership - The North Carolina Alliance for Health Professions Diversity (The North Carolina Alliance) - aims to reduce disparities in health status and healthcare by increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the healthcare workforce in the state of North Carolina, thereby creating a future healthcare workforce that is increasingly

proficient in cross-racial and cross-cultural interactions.

During the official ceremony on March 27, held on the Winston-Salem State University campus, the senior representatives signed the Memorandum of Understanding.

"We are impressed that North Carolina's AHEC [Area Health Education Centers], historically black colleges and universities [HBCUs], state universities, community colleges and state and local health agencies have all committed to working together to create a more diverse health workforce," Sullivan said.

"These academic, state and local health leaders clearly recognize that in the current environment, with millions more Americans securing health insurance, they still won't have access to care unless there

aren't more health professionals available to serve them."

Participating colleges, universities and state health agencies include: Bennett College, Campbell University, Davidson County Community College, East Carolina University, Elon University, University of North Carolina Greensboro, North Carolina Central University, High Point University, Appalachian State University, Fayetteville State University, Johnson C. Smith University, St. Augustine's University, Western Carolina University, Winston-Salem State University, N.C. Area Health Education Center, N. C. Department of Health and Human Services, Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, and the Forsyth County Department of Public Health.

"With so many North Carolina Alliance members working together to address the state's shortage of health professionals, I am confident we can increase the racial and ethnic diversity of newly-trained health professionals and improve access to healthcare across North Carolina," said Dr. Peggy Valentine, North Carolina Alliance co-founder and dean of the School of Health Sciences, Winston-Salem State University.

The first N.C. Health Professions Diversity Conference was held on March 31-April 1, 2008 in Greensboro, NC. Over 150 health professionals, educators, policy makers and legislators attended.

The conference produced a number of recommendations to increase the representation of diverse students in health professions programs.