

New interior design group proves that pro bono is still in style

by Bridgette Wright

Despite the fact that unemployment is at an all time high and most businesses' only concern is improving their bottom line, some companies are making pro bono work part of their business plan.

Cynthia Urbanik is a seasoned veteran of the design industry and owner of the brand new yet quickly growing interior design company, CU Interiors, which is already making a huge impact on the Charlotte charitable community. When Dress for Success, a worldwide non-profit organization that provides interview suits, confidence boosters, and career development to low-income women in over 75 cities worldwide, decided to expand their operation to a 5,000 square foot warehouse space, they immediately sought the design expertise of CU Interiors.

Wanting to transform the old warehouse into a Boutique and Career

Transformation Center that would be the life launching block for hundreds, if not thousands of disadvantaged women as they gather their lives and jump back into the workforce, Cynthia knew that she had what it took to get the job done. "I saw this as a win-win opportunity for everyone involved", she explains.

"This new boutique was a launching pad for my growing business and a great opportunity to use my skills as a designer to better the lives of those around me. Dress for Success is an organization that I believe in and it is important to me as a business owner to align my company with non-profits that myself and the community as a whole respect."

Despite many obstacles and an extremely tight budget, the design for the new boutique was a huge success. Cynthia viewed this as a great opportunity to broaden her scope as a designer and involve even more members of our community. Thus, stepping out of the typical "closed-door" design process,

Cynthia made calls to friends, colleagues and community members to solicit them for donated time, resources and materials that could serve to transform the old warehouse into a glamorous and welcoming boutique. In almost no time, volunteers and materials flowed in.

Through the diligence of Cynthia and those around her, Dress for Success received free or heavily discounted carpet, drapery, dressing room curtains, signage, and upholstery services. They even recycled break room cabinets from an adjacent vacant suite, thus helping to put the finishing touches on this ever-evolving project. "My design for the boutique was continuously evolving based on donations. However, people really seemed to understand that we were looking for items that were special and unique. The women at this boutique deserve to walk through the door and feel a sense of dignity and pride. I believe we accomplished that," states Cynthia.

