

“When I’m out looking at jobs or going to events, I know I have those clothes to make me feel more confident.”

— Victoria Nickel, Clark College student

Dressing for success



PHOTOS BY DANIELLE FROST/POST-RECORD

Samantha Knippel, 18, said the opportunity to look for free business clothing gave her a chance to, “know what to put together for job interviews and see what works well.”

Clark College Clothing Closet provides free business attire to students

BY DANIELLE FROST

Post-Record staff

The old phrase, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression,” rings especially true when it comes to job interviews. However, for those who are in college or just graduating, money can often be scarce.

This is where the Clark College Clothing Closet comes in.

For two days during the spring, all students are allowed the opportunity to pick out one free, career-wear outfit for potential job interviews or just to bridge the gap when funds for clothing get tight, so to speak.

For the past seven years, the clothing closet has provided professional attire for students with the help of donations from across the county.

During the past three years, more than 1,600 students have used it.

Jody Shulnak, service learning and volunteer program manager at the college, coordinates the program.

She said that usage has definitely increased the past few years due to people losing jobs and going back to school.

“The economy is a big factor,” Shulnak said. “Our demographic is always varied, but I noticed there were a lot of non-traditional students using it this year.”

Students have two days to browse racks of dresses, skirts, shirts, pants, belts, jewelry, shoes and coats. Makeshift dressing rooms were put together so shoppers could check the outfit for fit.

Victoria Nickel of Washougal, who is majoring in Japanese, found two new dresses and some accessories to try on.

“I came last year and decided to come back again because bodies change all the time and I needed some new clothes,” she said. “The clothing I got helped out quite a bit over the last year.”

Nickel said she plans to wear the clothing



Victoria Nickel hunts down the perfect belt to go with the outfit she chose at the Clark College Clothing Closet event.



Students peruse the racks during the two-day event where all attendees are allowed to pick out one free, career-wear outfit.

job hunting this year.

“When I’m out looking at jobs or going to events, I know I have those clothes to make me feel more confident,” she said.

Samantha Knippel, 18, of Vancouver, saw flyers posted around campus and decided to check it out.

“There is actually some really decent stuff here that fits me,” she said. “This is a good event because it helps me know what to put together for job interviews and see what works well.”

Sarah Weinberger, a clothing closet program assistant, enjoyed the event.

“I think it all worked out very nicely,” she said. “We put a lot of work into it and I’m glad the community appreciates it.”

Shulnak said her favorite aspect of the clothing closet was the hands-on aspect of the work.

“I love being able to see the difference this event makes,” she said. “We’re helping students feel confident and get career clothes, and it’s inspiring to see the benefit for stu-

dents.”

More than 50 volunteers helped make the clothing closet a success, she added.

“It’s a tremendous effort to put this on,” Shulnak said. “We have space limitations here, so we do everything in three weeks. This takes organization and a lot of volunteer power.”

Shulnak said she also works with faculty to spread the word about the clothing closet.

“When you see how it helps people, it’s worth every ounce of energy,” she said.