

# She'll help you to look your very best

By NANCY DEXTER

Whenever a special event comes up, or even when preparing to go to work in the morning or to church on Sunday, one crucial question is always what to wear. This problem is easily solved by arranging a consultation with local image consultant Scarlett De Bease. Ms. De Bease lives in Waccabuc, but has clients throughout Westchester and Fairfield counties whose closets she organizes and whose wardrobes she selects. What a skill it is to be able to sort through belongings and decide what is necessary and what is not, and objectively toss the rest.

Scarlett New York Image Consulting is primarily a word-of-mouth business. The owner has 20 years of experience working in the fashion and cosmetic industries, including stints as a makeup artist for Halston and Diane Furstenburg, as well as for the Clarins, Revlon and Charles of the Ritz cosmetic lines. In addition, she is a member of AICI, the Association of Image Consultants International, a professional association of men and women who specialize in assisting others with visual appearance and verbal and nonverbal communication.

Ms. De Bease began her career by doing image consulting for friends and family. "Three years ago a friend suggested that I do it professionally," she said.

"I am amazed at how many women say they have nothing to wear, yet their closets are full of clothing," Ms. De Bease said. "Does this sound familiar? So many women (and men) have tons of clothes, and so many still have the price tags on them. Women wear 20 percent of their clothes 80 percent of the time; so there's 80 percent excess."

When first meeting with clients, Ms. De Bease will do an assessment, advising them on the most flattering colors and styles to achieve their special look. After sorting through a client's closet and deciding what is flattering and what is not, the rest is either donated or tossed out. After this purge, clients' closets are emptier than before, but all their outfits are more flattering and they can more easily and quickly decide what to wear.

Criteria for selecting appropriate clothing for a specific body type include not wearing pants that are narrow at the ankle, because your hips look wider, or not wearing horizontal stripes since they make you look larger, unless the stripes are very narrow. To show clients how they look in all the different outfits selected from their closets, Ms. De Bease takes photos of each outfit as it is tried on. Usually, Ms. De Bease puts together about 20 to 30 outfits from each client's closet.

Jane Pollak is an executive coach and public speaking coach who has been a steady client since October 2007. "It is life altering not to have to worry about my image, because I can entrust it to Scarlett," she said. "I'm at a point in my life when I want to use my time to the best ad-



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vantage, since time is so precious."

She highly recommends Ms. De Bease, since she is nonjudgmental and tactful. Ms. Pollak is comfortable with her recommendations, and she feels that Ms. De Bease is inexpensive compared with other image consultants. Ms. Pollak's career involves frequent travel and public speaking, so maintaining her

appearance is very important for business.

However, in addition to professional women, many clients are mothers who just don't have time to pay attention to their own personal style. "They forget about themselves and use habitual clothing and makeup, which can often make them look older. If you don't change with

the times, you will look older," Ms. De Bease said. "I force women out of their ruts." Occasionally, she organizes makeup parties, or mother-daughter makeovers, and she often works with clients at Billy's Hair Salon in Mount Kisco.

Another service Ms. De Bease offers is personal shopping. She will arrive at a specified store an hour ahead to select clothing and bring it to the dressing room so by the time the client arrives, everything is organized — including matching shoes, clothing and accessories. "I force clients to try on items they wouldn't necessarily select for themselves but are within their budgets," she said. "I show them how long their pants should be, what kind of neckline looks best; how the colors enhance skin and hair textures. I point out subtle differences that will improve my client's appearance."

When Ms. Pollak first shopped at the Westchester Mall with Ms. De Bease, she said the preselected items were things she would not have selected, but the shopping trip was a success. For her daughter's wedding, there were multiple events to shop for.

"In no time, I had four complete outfits for the pre-nuptial dinner, the destination wedding, and other accompanying events, and the clothing, handbags and shoes all matched," Ms. Pollak said. "I didn't think I needed an image consultant, but now she's indispensable."

Ms. De Bease will work within any budget, from Kohl's to Neiman Marcus. Her personal favorites are Banana Republic and Ann Taylor; and Nordstrom's is great for shoes. She even works with teenagers, who are notorious for not wanting to listen to their mothers as far as personal style is concerned. She also works with clients on how to use makeup, teaching them how to apply it in the most flattering way. In addition, she will look through catalogs to find specific clothing items for clients, if need be.

Ms. De Bease noted that many clients have closets full of clothing they bought just because it was on sale. "It's easier to pass a bargain by if you know it's the wrong color or style. I show clients what not to wear," she said. "Women are happy with the end result and don't have to rely on me forever. Most eventually go off and do their own shopping; it just depends how savvy they are."

When working with clients, one frequently cited excuse is that "I don't want to bother getting an image consultant until I lose weight."

She counters that argument with the psychological approach that women often look thinner in the right style of clothing, so you might just start to lose weight if you look thinner.

Ms. De Bease charges \$75 per hour, with a minimum of three hours, for her services. For more information about her image consulting business, call Scarlett at 441-0756, e-mail [debease@optonline.net](mailto:debease@optonline.net), or visit [www.scarlettnewyork.com](http://www.scarlettnewyork.com).