Philadelphia University Students and A Chance to Heal Sponsor Fashion Show to Promote Body Diversity on Nov. 15

In the city’s first fashion show celebrating all body shapes and sizes, student designers will challenge industry standards of beauty.

PHILADELPHIA, October 2007 – Philadelphia University fashion design and merchandising students are presenting a fashion show celebrating bodies of all sizes and shapes in partnership with A Chance to Heal, a regional nonprofit dedicated to preventing eating disorders.

The show, Body Diversity: Everyone We Know is Beautiful, will take place Thursday, Nov. 15, at 7 p.m. in Philadelphia University’s Ravenhill Chapel.

The message is important and timely, coming at a time when some countries are cracking down on super-thin models strutting down the catwalk. Students in Philadelphia University’s highly regarded Fashion Design program will create innovative designs using styles, patterns and colors that complement a wide variety of body shapes.

“This competition challenges students to apply their design skills to important niches in the market—men and women who are short, tall and full-figured,” said Natalie Weathers, associate professor of fashion industry management. “Our students will hopefully be the designers who truly diversify the fashion world.”

More than nine million Americans struggle with anorexia, bulimia and binge-eating disorders, and hundreds die each year of eating disorders, according to A Chance to Heal.

The fashion show is designed to encourage consumers to question the size 0 culture, challenge industry standards of beauty and, in turn, gain a healthier view of their own bodies. Because they will be working in the fashion industry one day, the design students will have the opportunity to impact the emphasis on super-thin body ideals.

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“This is a groundbreaking opportunity for young designers and consumers to recognize that clothes can look great and fit right no matter what our size, shape, color or age,” said Ivy Silver, co-founder and president of A Chance to Heal, based in Jenkintown, Pa.

Student designers will compete in six categories, four for women (around town, wear to work, girls night out and gala premier) and two for men (day on the run and day to night). The fashions will be judged based on creativity, wearability, construction and design. Cash prizes of $150 will be awarded to the winning designers.

Judges include fashion industry leaders such as Mary Ellen Fairbanks, designer for TJ Maxx; Nora Gomez, vice president of product development for Lane Bryant; Mary Ellen Prentis, executive vice president for Victoria Secret Direct Production; Joan Shepp, owner of Joan Shepp; Cheryl Ann Wadlington, creative director for Evoluer Image Consultants; and Elizabeth Wellington, fashion writer for The Philadelphia Inquirer.

Wadlington applauds efforts to promote a more diverse body acceptance in the fashion world. “The average woman wears a size 12 and she needs to be able to find clothes that work for her body figure,” she said. “Until fashion retailers begin to show women that they appreciate the many shapes of real women, they will lose out on a core market share.”

Fashion design students from Philadelphia University’s Phi Psi Textile Fraternity and Fashion Apparel Management Experience group will present the fashion show. At the event, A Chance to Heal will hold educational programming on topics such as eating disorders, self-esteem, nutrition and how the fashion industry affects body image.

Ticket sales for the public, which will benefit A Chance to Heal, are available online at www.achancetoheal.org or by calling 215.885.2420. Philadelphia University students, faculty and staff can buy tickets on campus starting Nov. 1.

Philadelphia University, founded in 1884, is a private university with 3,200 full-and part-time students enrolled in more than 50 undergraduate and graduate programs. The University includes Schools of Architecture, Business Administration, Design and Media, Engineering and Textiles, Liberal Arts and Science and Health. For more information, go to www.PhiLaU.edu.

A Chance to Heal is a local nonprofit agency that works to prevent eating disorders through early diagnosis, education and advocacy. It was established in 2004 by Ivy Silver and her daughter Rachel, following Rachel's treatment for an eating disorder. For more information, go to www.achancetoheal.org.