

Anne Fenner changes looks and lives

BY LEIGH ANCONA

Behind every good manner is a good teacher, and for several local individuals and businesses, the woman to thank is Anne Fenner.

Since 1981, Fenner has been advising men, women and companies on professional image. Her clientele includes organizations such as the International Association of Business Communicators and Union Pacific Railroad.

"I love working one-on-one with people to help them feel comfortable with who they are," she said. Fenner's interest for helping people look and act their best started at a young age. While typical children favor books with fictitious characters such as "Clifford the Big Red Dog" and "Curious George," Fenner's favorite was "Manners Can Be Fun," by Munro Leaf. She always knew dress and etiquette were important, and wanted to help others reap the benefits of a successful image.

Whether you need to redeem your closet from those skin-tight '70s bell-bottoms or have your image critiqued to help you land that dream job, Fenner invites you into the comfort of her home to start your image management program. She works through a questionnaire on current physical and emotional status to identify areas of concern. If the concern is wardrobe, for example, she will begin with a systematic approach to diagnose and cure your closet.

First, Fenner will help sort through your closet, including shoes and jewelry — separating the good from the bad, and sometimes the ugly. Next, she will make a list to pre-shop for, depending on your personal budget. She will then shop for individual items in your size, your best colors and lines, and your own style — all within your budget. She will then take you to the stores where she has found what works best for you. Finally, she will help combine the new and old clothing for a clean look and closet.

"I love helping people save time and money while preventing mistakes," she said.

Working with about five individual clients a month, Fenner said some are



Anne Fenner has been advising Omahans on image for more than 25 years.

continual while others are one-time fixes. One constant client she works with has been taking her advice since 1981. Single appointments are also popular, such as a head-to-toe critique before an important interview. Although most of her clients are women, she also works with men to improve their professional images. Sometimes, she said, all an individual may need is internal confidence and an attitude adjustment.

"I believe in truth and beauty from the inside," she said.

Knowing there was a market for beautiful one-of-a-kind clothing, Fenner began co-producing Wearable Art Shows with Jo Anderson in 1993 at the Anderson O'Brien Fine Art Gallery in Countryside Village. Wearable Art Shows take place three times a year, offering classy, elegant tops, pants and scarves.

Fenner is also a book author. In 1988,

she co-wrote "Dress Smart" with artist Sandi Bruns. The second edition was just published by Fairchild Books in 2004. The book is humorously illustrated and helps men and women discover their authentic selves and dress accordingly.

She said she hoped the book would "help people find and communicate their best, most truthful selves through their image."

Since then, she has expanded her business to doing presentations for organizations on executive presence. Contemporary businesses strive for a professional image, and that image can begin with minor details, such as freshly ironed uniforms, she said. For example, she asks, "How can one expect to gain valuable clients when his/her co-worker arrives at a meeting 10 minutes late in wrinkled khaki pants and a clashing sweater?"

One presentation she is currently working on is for people from other cultures who want to succeed professionally in the United States. Fenner is working with three other women from "The Global Executive Institute" to help their clients feel more confident initiating a conversation with a neighbor or choosing the right fork to use at a formal dinner. One of their workshops will concentrate on four areas: how to eat, how to look, how to initiate small talk and how to act in a professional meeting.

In her spare time, Fenner studies spirituality and volunteers for the Tibetan Foundation. She also has served on several community boards, including: Omaha Junior League, Omaha Symphony Guild, Girl Scouts of America, Pi Beta Phi Alumnae, YMCA, Greater Resources for Omaha Women (GROW), Omaha Town Hall, Leadership Omaha Alumnae Association and Omaha Connections. Her husband, Michael, is a law professor at Creighton University and their two children, Hilary and Ben, are also in the law field.

Fenner is excited to continue making a positive impact on businesses and individuals in the future. "The reality is we are always being judged and sized up, so why not take advantage of help?" she said. **W**

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