

01 29 09 Fayetteville Observer The little black dress

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For many women, few things have proved to be as withstanding as the loyalty of a great friend and the reliability of the little black dress. Both are always in style, and neither will let you down.

In celebration of gal pals and the ubiquitous black frock, the Fayetteville Museum of Art will be hosting a “Girl’s Night Out” soiree Friday.

“We’re hoping women will come out with their girlfriends, don their little black dresses and diamonds and come have a party with us,” said Michele Horn, the museum’s assistant director and curator.

Friday’s event’s theme is based on the 1961 film “Breakfast at Tiffany’s” that featured the iconic black sheath dress on the movie’s star, Audrey Hepburn.

The museum’s shindig will be the first in a “Girl’s Night Out” series to target a female demographic.

“We’re trying to create new programing here at the museum and foster and encourage new audiences,” Horn said. “We thought that women like to have fun with their girlfriends and figured this was a great way to reach one woman and to reach five of her friends.”

There will be games, gift-basket raffles, martinis and hors d’oeuvres at the event. Every woman who purchases a ticket also will receive a \$25 gift certificate to Cape Fear Aesthetics, a local medical day spa.

Horn hopes the gathering will attract more women to the museum in the future.

“We hope that it will really transcend generations, and younger women will feel comfortable coming out and having a delightful evening with friends, as well as with women who are more knowledgeable of the movie,” Horn said.

Finding the right dress

Wearing a little black dress doesn’t have to be reserved for the party, but the event got us thinking about what makes the little black dress a closet staple.

“The versatility of the (black) dress is not to be equal(ed). It goes from desk to dinner, to weekend to workplace,” said Arlene Goldstein, Belk’s vice president of trend and fashion direction.

All a girl needs is the right accessories to make it office appropriate or glam for the evening, Goldstein said.

Samantha Thompson Hammons, the owner of Fabulous Finds boutique on Barcelona Drive, said her store offers a variety of black dresses to fit anyone’s personality.

“We have some with pleats, a flirty skirt, an Audrey Hepburn style with a demure look to it. We even got a classic shift dress with a belt,” Hammons said.

But if you’re on a budget, it’s best to choose an enduring style.

“I think if you have to spend the money for a black dress, you should do something that has the classic look that can be timeless and go from season to season,” Hammons said.

Above all else, Goldstein said, a proper fit is essential to making a little black dress stand out.

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'Breakfast at Tiffany's' Girl's Night Out

When: Friday, 7 p.m.

Where: Fayetteville Museum of Art at 839 Stamper Road

Tickets: \$35

Want to know more? Visit [www.](http://www.FayettevilleMuseumArt.org)

[FayettevilleMuseumArt.org](http://www.FayettevilleMuseumArt.org).

The Empire Waist

Dresses with the empire waist detailing often are fitted above the natural waistline and flare out over the tummy and hips to de-emphasize a thick midsection or ample hips.

"If you're not happy with your waistline then do something with an empire silhouette," Goldstein suggests.

Those likely to benefit: Pear-shaped women wishing to camouflage their waists or emphasize their busts.

How to wear it: Look for fabrics that drape over your body.

What to avoid: The pregnancy look. Make sure the most fitted section of the dress is at the smallest section of your ribcage, often directly under the bust.

The Classic Sheath

The sheath is a fitted garment, often with a defined waistline. This timeless cut is still just as stylish as it was in the 1960s, and is versatile enough to wear in any setting.

"Why has the sheath withstood the test of time? It works over and over again. It's universal," Goldstein said.

Those likely to benefit: Those who want to create or accent their curves or look taller.

How to wear it: Channel your inner Holly Golightly by accessorizing with pearls or diamonds. Or pair the frock with a skinny belt.

What to avoid: The wrong size. The sheath cut is often confused with the shift style — a garment that can be rather shapeless in its design. Sheath dresses tend to be form fitting, so if the dress appears too tight, go up a size.

The Wrap Dress

The dress's fabric wraps around the waist in this style, providing a clear distinction between the bust and torso and creating an hourglass figure.

"It accentuates a little more up top if you want to draw attention away from your bottom half," Hammons said.

Those likely to benefit: The curvy and the busty.

How to wear it: Many wrap dresses have plunging necklines. Do be discreet and add a camisole underneath.

What to avoid: Thin, unforgiving fabrics. Unless you have 1 percent body fat, opt for a flattering materials that will skim over your curves, not cling to them.

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