

Influential Women Spotlights Emmi Saufley: Founder Of Runway For A Cause And Champion For Inclusive Fashion

ELMIRA, NY, UNITED STATES, July 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Nonprofit Leader and Entrepreneur Uses Fashion, Mentorship, and Community Engagement to Empower Individuals and Create Meaningful Social Impact

Elmira, New York – Emmi Saufley is a nonprofit founder, entrepreneur, mentor, and community leader who has spent the past seven years demonstrating that fashion can be far more than clothing and style—it can be a powerful vehicle for confidence, empowerment, and community transformation. As the Founder of Runway For A Cause, Emmi has created an organization that combines fashion and philanthropy to generate meaningful impact while providing individuals from all walks of life with opportunities to feel seen, valued, and empowered.



Born and raised in Elmira, New York, Emmi grew up in the hometown of renowned fashion designer Tommy Hilfiger. Seeing someone from her small community achieve global success in fashion inspired her to pursue her own creative path and dream beyond traditional boundaries. Her passion for fashion began early and led her to enroll in a BOCES fashion design program, where she developed skills in sewing, garment construction, and design. Through mentorships and internships in the fashion industry, she continued to build her expertise and deepen her understanding of the creative world.

However, Emmi's journey into fashion was not without challenges. At just five feet tall, she was told she was too short to pursue many of the opportunities she had envisioned within the industry. Rather than allowing that rejection to define her, she used it as motivation to create

something entirely different—an inclusive space where every individual, regardless of height, size, background, identity, or life experience, could feel confident and celebrated.

That vision ultimately became Runway For A Cause.

Founded seven years ago, the organization has become a unique platform where fashion and fundraising intersect to support charitable initiatives both locally and globally. Through annual fashion shows and community-driven events, Runway For A Cause raises funds for nonprofit organizations while simultaneously creating transformational experiences for participants.

At the heart of the organization is the belief that everyone deserves the opportunity to step onto the runway and discover their own confidence.

Throughout the program's history, Emmi has witnessed countless individuals enter the experience uncertain of themselves and emerge empowered, self-assured, and ready to pursue new opportunities. The confidence participants gain extends far beyond fashion itself, becoming a belief in their ability to achieve whatever they set their minds to accomplish.

The transformations she has witnessed through the organization have become one of the greatest sources of inspiration in her own life. Participants embrace the experience in their own unique ways and often carry their newfound confidence into their careers, relationships, and future endeavors. That same transformation has shaped Emmi personally and reinforced her belief that growth and possibility are available to anyone willing to step into something new.

In addition to her nonprofit leadership, Emmi is the owner of Lake & Associates, LLC, a business specializing in styling, image development, event planning, and mentorship. Through her entrepreneurial work, she helps individuals and organizations cultivate confidence, define their personal brands, and step boldly into new opportunities.

She also serves on boards focused on youth initiatives, where she advocates for young people and helps them find their voice, purpose, and direction. Across all of her endeavors, a common thread remains: empowering others through creativity and encouraging them to embrace possibilities they may never have imagined for themselves.

Emmi attributes much of her success to the seven years she has spent building both her nonprofit and business ventures and to the incredible transformations she has witnessed in others. Watching individuals gain confidence through Runway For A Cause has reinforced her belief that meaningful change happens when people are given opportunities to be authentically themselves and are supported by a community that believes in them.

One of the most meaningful pieces of advice Emmi has received is the idea that as individuals rise and grow, others naturally adjust to that growth. The message has become one of the guiding philosophies behind her leadership and has strengthened her confidence in her mission.

and purpose.

She believes that when people trust their work and remain committed to their vision, they should not be afraid to evolve or show up boldly as themselves. Some people will align with that vision, while others may not, but authentic leadership requires the courage to continue moving forward regardless.

As someone who has built a career rooted in authenticity and inclusion, Emmi encourages young women entering the fashion industry to show up as the most authentic versions of themselves. She believes the industry is changing rapidly and that diversity is one of its greatest strengths.

For too long, fashion has been defined by narrow standards and unrealistic expectations. Through her work, Emmi hopes to continue challenging those outdated perceptions and demonstrating that there is room for people of all shapes, sizes, identities, and backgrounds to succeed.

She wants young people to understand that by embracing who they are, they not only empower themselves but also become role models for others and help create an industry that is more representative, welcoming, and inclusive.

Like many nonprofit leaders, Emmi acknowledges that one of her greatest challenges is securing sustainable funding. During the past seven years, Runway For A Cause has operated entirely through fundraising efforts and has not received grant funding. Because many grants have highly specific requirements, securing financial support can often be difficult.

The organization also relies entirely on volunteers. Neither Emmi nor her team members receive compensation, making it essential to find individuals who share the organization's values and are committed to making a positive difference through service.

While finding and retaining volunteers and balancing limited resources can be challenging, she also views these obstacles as opportunities for creativity, innovation, and growth.

The values that guide Emmi's life and leadership are intentionality and community. She believes in being purposeful with her time, commitments, and actions. If she commits to something, she shows up fully and gives it her best effort.

Community is equally important to her. She deeply admires the people who quietly make a difference every day without seeking recognition or praise. These individuals, in her view, are often the true changemakers who strengthen communities and inspire others through their service.

By surrounding herself with people who are committed to doing good and creating positive change, Emmi continues to build organizations and experiences that empower others to step

into bold, unfamiliar spaces and discover strengths they never knew they possessed.

Through Runway For A Cause, Lake & Associates, and her ongoing community leadership, Emmi Saufley is redefining what fashion can be—an instrument for confidence, inclusion, and lasting social impact.

Learn More about Emmi Saufley:

Through her Influential Women profile, <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/Emmi-Saufley>, or through her profile on Runway For A Cause, <https://runwayforacause.org/meet-the-team/>

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