

A Gift That Fits

THE BODFORD FAMILY'S SUPPORT OF
THE SUIT UP PROGRAM EMPOWERS THE NEXT
GENERATION OF BUSINESS LEADERS.

"It's a way to give back and help others achieve their goals and dreams by giving them a little more confidence to do so."

JASON BODFORD
President, EPES Logistics

Jason Bodford grew up hearing about the importance of philanthropy.

His dad, Al Bodford, paid his way through college by working at a drug store's lunch counter. And when he needed a suit for his first job interview, the drug store owner bought it for him.

This small act of goodwill paved the way for Bodford's own successful career, first as an accountant for a trucking firm and eventually as the owner of EPES Transport and EPES Logistics, two thriving transportation firms based in the Triad.

So it's especially fitting that, today, Jason and his family members support the Suit Up program – a partnership between JCPenney and the Bryan School of Business and Economics. The family's gift helps cover the cost of professional attire for eligible students at the Bryan School.

"Based on my father's experience, Suit Up really resonated with us," says Jason Bodford, president of EPES Logistics. "It's a way to give back and help others achieve their goals and dreams by giving them a little more confidence to do so."

Making a Difference

Bodford recently had the opportunity to meet Kevin Montes Mendoza '25, who received two suits from the program, which he credits with helping boost his business future. He wore his new business attire to a career fair, where he had more than 20 interviews. "My suit was with me at every single one, and I was able to walk out of there with five internship offers," he says.

The following year, Mendoza applied again and received a second suit that he wore when inducted as president of UNCG's chapter of the Association of Latino Professionals for America (ALPFA). His work in this student organization has helped him develop leadership skills, build his network, and attend national career-related events.

"Both times I received a Suit Up suit, it played a big part in what I was doing at the time," Mendoza says. "Coming into college, I didn't have any business clothes, so when it would be time for networking events, I would throw on whatever I could find. Being able to buy professional clothing helped my confidence and improved how people perceive me."

Mendoza, who graduated in May with a degree in finance and economics, has landed a full-time job with Capital One in McLean, Virginia.

"Kevin is just an excellent example of what we hope to achieve through supporting the Suit Up program," Bodford says. "When we met, he shared with me that he felt like he could measure up, even to Ivy Leaguers, and compete for those jobs."

Paying It Forward

It's just the kind of kickstart that impacted Bodford's dad all those years ago.

After gaining experience in accounting jobs, Al Bodford took a huge financial risk to buy EPES Transport, which at the time was breaking even or perhaps even losing money. He built it from a company with 75 trucks to one that had more than 1,500 when he sold it about five years ago. In the 1990s, the family also created Epes Logistics, an award-winning company that delivers cargo throughout North America for clients ranging from small mom-and-pop companies to Fortune 100 corporations.

Greensboro has long been home to the family. While Bodford himself didn't attend UNCG, he sees the university's impact on so many students throughout Greensboro and the state. A significant number of Epes employees have furthered their education at the university as well.

But Bodford knows that state and federal funding can't provide for all the needs of the university or its students, and that's where philanthropy comes in. He hopes this gift and others from the Bodford Family Foundation encourage people to consider similar donations to the Bryan School and its programs.

"You often hear the term force multiplier, and that's certainly something we look for," he says. "Donating one dollar doesn't just have to mean one dollar if it's donated in the right place to the right people with the right plans. The more lives it can touch the better. If financial donations can lead to more Kevins having more successful foundations in life, that's a wonderful return on investment." ■

Dressing for Success

Every year, generous Bryan School donors provide sponsorships to cover the cost of a full professional outfit (\$250 value). This enables students to dress for success in professional situations such as job interviews and career fairs. JCPenney also provides a discount day to help offset costs for students.

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