

2022 Symposium Session: Accidental Entrepreneurial Philanthropist: The Magic of Opening Doors

Payton McGriff was finishing college and preparing to take her dream job in 2017. She had no expectation that she'd be starting her career by building an international nonprofit in the West African country of Togo. Yet, when a door opened for Payton to explore an idea for helping girls go to school in Togo, she took the leap. Her idea was simply to teach young women who could not afford to buy their required school uniforms how to sew. Hear Payton share her riveting story about her amazing five-year journey building an organization that serves thousands of girls and women in Togo and how one open door led to a destination she never dreamed of and a life of purpose unplanned.



Payton McGriff

Founder of S H E | Style Her Empowered

While finishing her Undergrad at the University of Idaho in 2017, Payton founded Style Her Empowered (S H E), a nonprofit creating sustainable education and employment opportunities for girls and women around the world. After meeting a professor from Togo, Africa, Payton traveled to Togo to research barriers preventing girls from attending school and found that a required school uniform was the most common reason girls were being denied their education. Her experience in Togo led Payton to turn down a career in Marketing and Found S H E in the summer of 2017.

After discovering students were outgrowing their required school uniforms part-way through the school year, Payton and her team designed the S H E uniform: the world's only school uniform that expands up to six sizes and a foot in length so girls can wear them confidently for years longer than alternatives. But S H E didn't stop there. To address more barriers that prevent girls from attending school, S H E discovered a way to recycle 100% of the fabric waste from producing S H E uniforms into reusable menstrual pads for girls. In just five years, S H E has grown to support more than 1,500 girls through school annually.

S H E is now locally-led and powered by a team of 30 incredible women in Togo. In their zero-waste apparel factory, S H E intentionally hires seamstresses from low-income and low-education backgrounds. S H E guarantees salaries above living wage, no more than 40 hour work weeks, 3 months paid maternity leave, and childcare. S H E also provides paid time for adult literacy, numeracy, and financial management in their paid-to-learn employment model.

Now a Nasdaq Milestone Maker, Idaho Woman of the Year (2020), Idaho Entrepreneur Challenge winner, and creator of the S H E uniform, Payton is using her unlikely story of marketing student turned international entrepreneur to build a world where girls and women can do more than survive, they can flourish.

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