

NETWORKING ROYALLY!

*Mother, Businesswoman, Advocate,
Philanthropist, and Author*

BY DONNA MESSER

FOR TEN YEARS THE DUCHESS OF YORK HAS SERVED AS U.S. SPOKESPERSON FOR WEIGHT WATCHERS INTERNATIONAL, INC. THE DUCHESS REMAINS A POPULAR ROLE MODEL FOR MILLIONS WHO STRUGGLE WITH WEIGHT MANAGEMENT AND IN RECENT YEARS SHE HAS EMERGED AS AN INTERNATIONAL VOICE ON HEALTHY WEIGHT. IN 1996, THE DUCHESS PUBLISHED HER BEST-SELLING AUTOBIOGRAPHY, *MY STORY*. IN JANUARY 2003, SHE PUBLISHED: *WHAT I KNOW NOW: SIMPLE LESSONS LEARNED THE HARD WAY*.



I met The Duchess of York at a conference in Kitchener, where I had the privilege of being on the same stage as her. Not only did I get the chance to hear her speak, I had the opportunity to interview her for this article. I was amazed at how approachable she was, once I had permission to be one of only two journalists allowed to interview her. The Duchess is a mother, businesswoman, advocate, philanthropist, and author.

I read her best selling autobiography “My Story” before we met, so I felt that I already knew the “real” Sarah Ferguson. In the paragraphs below, I share my insight on The Duchess. She is truly an amazing woman, accomplishing all of what she has set out to do, using the “Royal Art of Networking”.

Sara Ferguson is the Duchess of York; she first stepped on to the world stage in 1986 when she married Britain’s Prince Andrew, second son of Her Majesty The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh. The Duke and Duchess of York have two daughters, Princess Beatrice Elizabeth Mary of York and Princess Eugenie Victoria Helena of York. The Duke and Duchess divorced in 1996 after 10 years of marriage and they remain close as friends and as co-parents.

For the past 12 years Sarah Ferguson, The Duchess of York, has successfully balanced motherhood, health advocacy and charity work, with a diverse and challenging international career. Strange as it may sound, The Duchess of York has been “Networking Royally”.

I watched Sarah Ferguson, The Duchess of York work a room the night before “The Inspiring Women Conference” in Kitchener. She is a gracious guest; this multi-talented lady walks into a room, scans it quickly, and immediately begins shaking hands with everyone. Her handshake is firm, she smiles at each person she meets, and if they are wearing a name badge, she addresses them by name. She listens attentively to each person she speaks to, her body language is open and friendly. The people in attendance see an “expert” working the room.

In 2006, the Duchess founded Hartmoor, a lifestyle and media company based in New York that is devoted to promoting wellness and supporting motherhood. The company earmarks a portion of its profits for charity through the Sarah Ferguson Foundation.

It is the Duchess’ vision to pursue successful business ventures that will have a positive social impact. As the spokesperson, it is her role to raise awareness and to be approachable to any and all who are interested in supporting her foundations. The Duchess uses the “Royal Art of Networking” often calling upon her protocol training from the past. She’s a natural networker; combining her talents with an open and friendly attitude, she soon has everyone in the room a “Fergie Fan”.

The Sarah Ferguson Foundation marks a new chapter in the Duchess of York’s long history of philanthropic work dedicated to making a difference in the lives of suffering children and families throughout the world. She is a popular children’s author. Among her titles is a four-book series about “The Adventures of Little Red”.

Eight Excerpts from the “Royal Art of Networking”

- Do your homework; make sure you know who might be in the room.
- Have a firm and friendly handshake.
- Smile.
- Address people by name if they are wearing a name badge.
- Body language is important—lean forward when speaking to each person.
- Spend only a few minutes with anyone.
- If you have a drink, hold it in your left hand.
- If you’ve met before, mention the meeting.

After reading her autobiography, I wonder if “The Adventures of Little Red”, might quite possibly be a reflection of a young Sarah Ferguson? Sarah held up “Little Red” during the final few words of her speech and it was understood that this little rag doll would be taking a more important role in the lives of children and families throughout the world. We’re all looking forward to seeing what “Little Red” will be up to in the next few years.

The Duchess is almost 50 and has demonstrated to herself and to anyone else who will listen that she has found out who she is, what she cares about, and how she will go about spreading the word. Today she’s quite capable of being her own person and that’s someone who is happy being a mother, a businesswoman, an advocate, a philanthropist, and an author.

Sarah has come a long way; she was the Queen of the tabloids, and a royal pain and now this red-haired former Royal, known as Fergie is an inspirational speaker with fans around the world. **E**

Donna Messer is an author, international speaker, and coach. She is a networking expert that often makes incredible connections using the “Art of Effective Networking”. To connect with Donna, visit www.connectuscanada.com. For more information on Sarah Ferguson, The Duchess of York, visit www.sarahferguson.com