

STYLE & Sustenance

IT'S AN OVERCAST AFTERNOON, AND LAUREN

Bush is darting to meetings after attending her sister's graduation from Barnard College. Being constantly on the go and juggling commitments is all in a day's work — and Bush wouldn't have it any other way. A member of the Bush political dynasty — she's one of 17 cousins, on her father Neil's side — the former print model and current fashion designer also helms FEED, a humanitarian organization aimed at ensuring the world's children have nutritious meals, and enough of them. Business appointments have been a staple of her schedule since she cofounded FEED in 2007.

Bush became truly aware of the global hunger crisis when, as a student at Princeton, she served as an Honorary Spokesperson for the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP). She traveled to eight developing countries to observe WFP's food-aid and school-feeding operations firsthand and was touched by the kids she encountered. Back in the States, she put her design skills and activist energy to work and created the FEED 1 bag, a simple tote of natural burlap and organic cotton. She also joined forces with then-WFP Communications Officer Ellen Gustafson to launch FEED

Projects. Out of Bush's apartment, the duo coordinated the grassroots manufacturing and selling of the bags, the proceeds of each sale feeding one child in school for one year through WFP.

Since then, FEED Projects has expanded its line of environmentally friendly accessories (which includes a FEED clutch); formed the FEED Foundation to distribute funding to WFP, UNICEF, and other hunger-fighting entities; and established FEED USA to improve the nutritional content of school lunches across America. As CEO and Creative Director of FEED Projects and the foundation's Chairman of the Board, Bush heads a small, dedicated team, now comfortably ensconced in a New York City-based office. The organization has sold more than 500,000 bags and provided more than 61 million meals to date. In November 2010, Bush received the Accessories Council Excellence Award for Humanitarian of the Year.

The 27-year-old Texas native, who studied fashion design and photography in New York and London, modeled for designers like Tommy Hilfiger and Isaac Mizrahi, and

PRINCETON GRAD *Lauren Bush*
IS TAKING ON WORLD HUNGER AND BUILDING COMMUNITIES
IN A FASHIONABLE WAY — ONE BAG AT A TIME.

by Julie Jacobs



Lauren Bush with Rwandan students who benefit from the sale of FEED products.

I was always surrounded by the notion that serving others is what you're meant to do in this world.

“Seeing your product, your creation, out there and being used and appreciated by others ... to this day, it’s still the most exciting and reinforcing experience for me.”

appeared on the covers of *Vogue*, *W*, and other high-profile publications, oversees her own clothing line as well — also with a bent toward helping underserved populations. The Lauren Pierce collection features striking pieces made of unique fabrics hand-dyed by women from the Congo; the work enables these artisans to support their families and villages.

Apart from running FEED and Lauren Pierce, Bush has had one more undertaking on her plate in recent months: planning her fall wedding to David Lauren, son of fashion icon Ralph Lauren. *New Jersey Life Health + Beauty* spoke with Bush about the marriage of fashion and philanthropy in her life, her future aspirations, and her days at Princeton.

Q: *Describe your typical day at FEED.*
Each day is different, and that’s what I really love about FEED. We’re either exploring a new partnership, working on a new design, or marketing the organization — all the different aspects that go into building a small business.

Q: *Was there an aha moment behind creating FEED?*
I had the honor of visiting many of the UN’s feeding programs — in Guatemala, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Chad, Tanzania, and Kenya — and was really moved by the school feeding, which give kids living in the poorest countries a free school lunch. This meal motivates them to go to and stay in school. So, while it obviously gives them nutritious food, it also helps promote education.

The *aha* moment was [the idea] to make a cool, stylish consumer product that would be a fun and easy way to raise money and awareness for this feeding program. Bags are universal. Everyone needs one.

Q: *When did you know you were on target with FEED?*
The first time I saw a stranger carrying the bag down the street in New York City. Seeing your product, your creation, out there and being used and appreciated by others ... to this day, it’s still the most exciting and reinforcing experience for me.

Q: *How do partnerships with major merchandisers benefit the organization?*
Working with great partners, like GAP and Pottery Barn, is really important, because they help us sell our products and spread awareness about what we do. This past July, we launched a partnership with Clarins, the skincare company, which not only is contributing products to a new pouch we created, but also is committing funds to provide over one million school meals over the next two years.

Q: *What was the inspiration behind Lauren Pierce?*
I’ve always been interested in design, and loved seeing and learning about the different traditional crafts when I traveled to various countries. I was impressed by the artisans’ work, which is beautiful but often not desirable in a Western market. My idea was to take the artisan-made fabric and make it into something contemporary and wearable. Our fabric is

hand-dyed in the Congo, so each piece is one-of-a-kind. And our customers can feel great about the clothing and appreciate the women it’s supporting.

Q: *Fashion and philanthropy seem to guide much of your life. Is this purposeful or does it come naturally?*
It really is a combination of design, fashion, and philanthropy that excites me, and I think taking any one away from the three would be less interesting to me. What ties FEED with Lauren Pierce is the bigger picture of helping those in need in a way that’s accessible — through design.

Q: *As part of the Bush family, was public service instilled in you as a child?*
Yeah, for sure. I was always surrounded by the notion that serving others is what you’re meant to do in this world. My mom would take us to volunteer at hospitals and soup kitchens starting from when we were very young.

Q: *You modeled for Elite for seven years. What did you take away from that experience?*
I was a super-part-time model [laughs]. It was more of a hobby and never my life’s ambition, but it was a fun introduction to the fashion world, which I’m obviously interested in. It was cool to play dress-up and work with really great photographers.

Q: *You’re constantly on the go but look so healthy. What is your secret to looking and feeling great?*
I don’t pretend to have any secrets, per se, but I do enjoy working out and feeling

Bush received the Accessories Council Excellence Award for Humanitarian of the Year in 2010.

strong. I run or take exercise classes, do a little yoga — sort of mix it up.

Q: *How has your anthropology degree from Princeton helped with FEED?*

It's allowed me to look at cultures and development issues in a more discerning way.

Q: *What was your favorite extracurricular activity at Princeton?*

I was a member of the Undergraduate Life Committee, part of Student Council, and helped organize "Service and Style," a student-run fashion show and fundraiser. Princeton is gorgeous, and I was fortunate to be there. I just went to my fifth-year reunion, and it was a lot of fun.

Q: *You've accomplished so much already. What are your future objectives?*

Beyond getting married and having a family, I have many goals and ambitions. I think it's a constant evolution. As long as I'm doing the best I can, being fulfilled creatively, and knowing my work is helping others, then I'm satisfied. *

LAUREN'S PRINCETON FAVORITES

Hangout:
Small World Coffee

Eating club:
Ivy

Class/Professor:
Peter Singer, Ethics

