

REGIONAL NEWS

Education foundation helps students dress for prom

BY MICHAEL SPECK
STAFF

Everyone who graduated high school remembers prom.

Some memories might be grand, like getting fitted for that perfect gown before being crowned prom queen. Some might be embarrassing, like confessing to a crush after a drink from the spiked punch. But perhaps the worst prom memory would be graduating and not going to your prom.

The Education Foundation of Niagara is holding an inaugural clothes drive in an attempt to eliminate one obstacle which might keep a hard-working scholar from attending high school's best party: the inability to buy clothing.

"Some students, if they don't have the outfit to wear, might just decide not to go," said Dara Goulet, event coordinator.

That's where Prom Project Niagara comes in.

To help graduating students, both secondary and elementary, who need clothing, the foundation will be collecting suits, dresses and the like at several locations across Niagara, said Goulet.

Students who have worked through adversity to graduate are being referred to the foundation by principals, guidance counsellors and youth and child workers, she said.

Referred students can then pick up the gathered clothing at the Quality Hotel Parkway Convention Centre, which donated the space, on May 2 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. The foundation is hoping to have enough duds to help outfit 100 students, said Goulet.

The foundation came up with the idea when executive director Julie Densham began researching and discovered that several similar initiatives take place across Canada and the United States, said Goulet.

Everyone knew that it would be a good fit for Niagara, she said.

"With all the job losses in Welland and the way the economy is going, it's the perfect year to start our prom project," Goulet said.

The expenses of the perfect night easily add up. For young girls, factoring in a new dress, makeup, shoes and a hair style, and it all could be as much as \$250, for a conservative estimate.

That doesn't take into account the costs of a prom ticket or a limousine ride, said Goulet.

Despite its cost, prom is something that nobody should miss, she said, and attendance isn't all of it. The perfect outfit can lay the foundation for a magical night that celebrates the graduate's hard work.

"It's a milestone in their lives, and especially with girls," said Goulet. "If you don't have a dress

that's in, people are going to notice."

Moore's Clothing has jumped on board by donating four suits, along with shoes and shirts, and Queen Fashion Must Haves in St. Catharines is donating 10 dresses. Brock University and Niagara College are also doing drives for the cause, said Goulet.

For more information or to refer a student, call the foundation at 905-641-2929, extension 4107.

New and used clothing can be dropped off at the following locations:

- Bev's Dry Cleaning Depot — St. Catharines — 33 Lakeshore Rd.
- Lakeport Cleaners and Laundromat — St. Catharines — 220 Lakeport Rd.
- Lake & Carlton Laundromat — St. Catharines — 117 Carlton St.
- Royal Professional Dry Cleaners — Niagara Falls — 3519 Portage Rd.
- Yazz Cleaners & Quick Stitch — Niagara Falls — 7637 Lundy's Lane
- Yazz Dry Cleaners & Quick Stitch—Welland — 800 Niagara St.
- Lighthouse's Dry Cleaners — Welland — 545 Niagara St.
- Lighthouse's Dry Cleaners — Port Colborne — 388 King St.
- Pike Dry Cleaners — Fort Erie — 93 Jarvis St.



Education Foundation of Niagara Prom Project Niagara coordinator Dara Goulet and executive director Julie Densham show off some of the donated duds they hope to outfit needy students for prom or graduation.