



Rebekah Workman/Teligram

Volunteers, such as Stacie Bratton with the Junior League of Bell County, say they are in dire need of prom dresses like this for Project Prom, a clothing and funds drive to help Temple High School's young women attend spring prom looking their best.

Volunteers help 'Cinderellas'

By Fred Afferbach
TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Apparently the age-old children's story about Cinderella yearning to attend the ball — but can't because she has no evening gown — is no fairy tale after all.

Today in Temple, about 30 young women who wish to go to the high school prom are struggling to find the funds to purchase dresses, shoes and accessories. Although there is no magic wand in this modern episode, three groups of local women volunteers have taken on the role of Fairy Godmother.

Calling their program Project Prom, Communities

In Schools, the Junior League of Bell County and the Women in Leadership Committee at the Temple Chamber of Commerce have teamed up to ensure these young women turn plenty of heads at this year's Temple High School prom.

The volunteers are gathering gently used formal dresses, shoes and jewelry, and collecting cash donations to pay for alterations and hairdos, and possibly corsages and pedicures. The clothes are stored at Second Hand Rose, a used clothing store on East Central Avenue owned by the Junior League.

The women volunteers said high school prom is an impor-

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tant landmark in a young woman's life and one of the most important social events of their high school years. Looking back at old photographs decades later can be comical and sentimental.

"It's a big deal. It's usually your first formal dress for young women. You get to feel pretty," said Amy Perkins, Junior League volunteer. "You want to help

any teenage girl to go to prom because there is only one chance."

Project Prom began last year when a woman in the leadership committee noticed some high school students couldn't afford the \$150-plus needed for a prom dress. Working on short notice, they still managed to help a few young women. But this year, 30 applicants are expecting prom dresses. With only three weeks before cutoff for donations, volunteers say they are well short of the garments needed. Organizers say the dresses are out there, they just need to reach out to likely donors.

"A lot of the girls can't

wear the same prom dress, so there's all these dresses in people's closets that they're not going to use, old bridesmaids dresses and formal dresses," said Cindy Zavondy, chairwoman for the leadership committee.

As for the young women's identity, the program is confidential. Organizers say they don't know the girls' names, and looking around the dance floor on prom night, you won't be able to tell which girls received free dresses and which didn't.

"That's kind of the beauty of it, it's anonymous, like at Christmas," volunteer Brynn Ray said.

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