

Dress exchanges can take bite out of prom expenses

Written by Stacy Taff

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About this time each year, high school girls are on the hunt for the perfect prom dress. Once they find “the one,” it’s all downhill from there with shoes, jewelry and other accessories, hair, makeup, nail and even tanning appointments, boutonnieres and corsages, transportation and of course, a date.

This may seem excessive but in an age where role models are actresses and over-the-top reality television stars, many young women view prom as their red-carpet moment and thus, a reason to splurge.

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In 2012, a survey done by Visa revealed the average amount spent on prom per child was approximately \$1,078, a noticeable increase from the \$807 average of 2011. Even more shocking was that families in the lowest income bracket were estimated to spend the most of all, nearly twice the national average.

The spike in spending could be attributed to the rising manufacturer costs for prom dresses, which went up an average of 20 percent from 2010 to 2011 and 25 percent from 2011 to 2012. This can seem like a bit of a waste, since most prom dresses are worn once and then shoved in the back of a closet.

A way to get around this predicament is an event called a “dress exchange,” like the one that took place at St. John’s High School Saturday afternoon.

During these exchanges, girls pay a \$5 fee to bring their worn prom dresses in and put them on display for other girls to try on and purchase for substantially reduced prices. This way, prom-goers can get rid of their old dresses and find new ones without spending hundreds of dollars, allowing them to put that money toward the rest of their prom purchases or to something else entirely.

“With the economy the way it is, a lot of people now can’t afford to go and spend a lot of money on a prom dress,” Coordinator Kelley Beining said. “This is just a way to help them find a great dress at a great price and also help them get rid of their old prom dresses.”

All the proceeds from the dress exchange will go to the St. John’s Relay for Life team.