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Project Prom helps teens who can't afford the high school tradition

BY MATT SCHAFER

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You can't go to the prom without a great dress, and For the Kid in All of Us wants to make sure [money](#) doesn't keep local teens from experiencing this high school tradition.

The annual rite of passage that is prom doesn't come cheap. The dress, the tuxedo, tickets, flowers, plus dinner at a nice restaurant — it all adds up. The new [Project Prom](#) fundraiser aims to help teens make their prom dreams happen, says Christopher Bess, president of For the Kid in All of Us.

"We've always sort of focused on big events for kids," Bess said. "When we thought about adding events we didn't want to add an event just to add another. We wanted to focus on a meaningful event that could help out older children."

Project Prom

Sunday, March 20, 5-8 p.m.
 W Atlanta Midtown
 188 14th St., Atlanta, GA 30361
 \$35, 21 and up
www.forthekid.org

For the Kid is best known for December's Toy Party, which donates toys to under privileged children, and Back Park in the Park, which collects backpacks filled with school supplies for children in local schools.

Project Prom is a cocktail party on March 20 with a [fashion show](#) to raise money for teens from low-income homes to attend their junior or senior proms.

"It may evolve into [a dance] in future years, but this year it's just going to be a fashion show as a primary event, there won't be any prom king and queen," Bess says. "It's not a dance or prom in any form."

Dresses from the fashion show will be donated, and additional funds raised will help cover tuxedo rentals, limousine services, hair and make up and corsage donations. The money isn't specifically restricted to help gay and transgender teens, but the beneficiaries are YouthPride, Cool Girls, CHRIS Kids and the Atlanta Public Schools.

"We're giving enough money to cover the tux rental and the cost of the dinner so they can go out and have a good night," Bess says.

Attendance at Project Prom is limited to 250. Organizers are focused on advance ticket sales, but a limited number of tickets may be available at the door.

Fashion makeover

The main event of the 21-and-up party on the upper levels of the W-Atlanta Midtown Hotel will be the prom fashion show. High school students will model dresses repurposed by high school fashion students. Miss Georgia 2010 Christina McCauley will also model a dress.

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Vincent Martinez founded the UrbanCouture program at Grady High School. His students – along with Karen English of English Design Laboratory and Jason Bunin, a professor of fashion design at SCAD-Atlanta – helped to repurpose almost 100 aging dresses Martinez called “bridesmaid ugly prom dresses.”

“The challenge was they were already constructed, which isn’t necessarily a bad thing, but they were so dated,” Martinez says. “They screamed 1980s and 1990s. So we removed all of the elements that kept them in a decade, two decades, sometimes three decades in the past. So we removed all the poofy sleeves, the beaded chokers that were popular in the ‘90s.”

Part of the real life “Project Runway” style challenge was to create dresses that girls would want to wear while teaching the students about design. Martinez says event goers shouldn’t expect high fashion, rather a new take on old looks.

“We made some dresses strapless, we did a lot of repairs... we changed the length on a lot of dresses,” Martinez says. “There were a lot of dresses from that time where women wore beaded dresses from head to toe, and that was fine at the time, but now they look dated.”

The dresses were donated by Becca’s Closet, a nonprofit dedicated to getting donated prom dresses to high school girls. The organization was founded in memory of Rebecca Kirtman, a Florida teenager who spearheaded an effort to provided 250 dresses to fellow students in Davie, Fla.

Kirtman was killed in an automotive accident and local chapters of Becca’s Closet have sprung up across the county.

Top photo: Vincent Martinez (right) fits a dress on a student in preparation for Project Prom, as students in Grady High School’s UrbanCouture program work to remake the donated dresses into frocks that teen girls will be proud to wear on their big night. (Photos courtesy FTK)



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