

Charity gives students opportunity to experience prom

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Prom is one of the oldest high school phenomena. Students dawn their most elegant clothing to promenade before each other and a crowd of eager parents before dancing the night away.

Some high school students, however, find themselves with inadequate funds to purchase the clothing expected at prom and thus feel their attendance to this event is unachievable.

For students facing this dilemma, Rebecca Kirtman founded Becca's Closet during the spring of her freshman year. According to beccascloset.org, Kirtman started the charity single-handedly collecting and donating over 250 formal dresses for young girls across Southern Florida.

Today, the charity has active chapters in 32 states and one of those chapters is located here, in Manhattan.

The Manhattan Chapter, the only chapter of the charity in Kansas, was started by Kelsey Lackey in February of 2008.

Lackey said she began Becca's Closet after a conversation with her mother. The two were discussing a girl who had found an affordable prom dress when Lackey said she realized there were probably many girls in the area who could not afford prom gowns.

Since this is the first year for the Manhattan chapter, they have only serviced one prom season. Lackey said while the turnout was not excellent, it was very good for a beginning charity.

"If we can help just one person, it will all be worth it," Lackey said.

This year, however, Lackey said she has already seen a big response from the churches in the community and Becca's Closet is continuing to reach out to community members for support.

Lackey said many K-State sororities have answered the requests of Becca's Closet and donated dresses.

"As a previous person who's had tons of dresses, a lot of times we spend lots of money and the dresses just sit there and we look at them and look at them," said Lorle Bolt, Becca's Closet volunteer. "You get a cleaner closet for more new clothes and you help someone have one of the wonderful nights we got to experience. You need to allow them to create their own memories."

Bolt recalled helping a high school student find her perfect dress last prom season.

"She came in with her mom and it was just really fun to see her reaction," Bolt said. "Her mom visited with me and shared that she wouldn't have been able to attend otherwise because they were fiscally strapped. We had enough dresses that she was able to find that perfect one."

This coming prom season, Becca's Closet is hoping to set up for different shopping weekends in the University Christian Church Fellowship Hall, said Lackey.

Becca's Closet not only collects gently used dresses, but also shoes, jewelry, make-up and other prom accessories.

"We may not be changing the world or anything but like Rebecca said, 'little things can make a big difference.' You shouldn't have to miss out on a high school experience," Lackey said. "It feels really good just to be able to help anybody."