

FEATURE PROFILE

PROM**an experience of a lifetime
or an evening of sadness?****The Ballroom Blitz**

Remember the little black dress that made you the hit of your senior prom? Or the red number that set you apart at a Christmas party or wedding? Are they still tucked away in the back of your closet? Your good memories of yesterday could become a wonderful reality for a teenager today.

This is prompting local women to dig out their old memories to help create new memories for young girls who can't afford a prom dress, and who might miss out on such an important milestone in their lives. A unique non-profit organization in our area, the Ballroom Blitz, is aiming to collect new or gently worn party dresses, gowns and a variety of accessories, and then distribute them free of charge to girls who otherwise would not be able to attend their prom because of the costs.

Local businesswoman, Robin Hadfield, owner of Ditto Disc

- a CD Replication service - organized the donation effort. "Most of us have these one-time evening, party or wedding dresses that could be enjoyed by another," said Hadfield. "After years of involvement in our school system, I saw the reality of girls who could not afford the costs associated with going to their prom. An evening which should be celebrating a major accomplishment in their lives became, instead, just another evening, working multiple jobs, or taking care of family members," explained Hadfield. "Knowing how important it can be for young ladies in high school to participate in activities like the prom, and help them feel good about themselves - well, that was enough motivation for me."

At a yearly "boutique", girls are assigned a personal shopper, who will help them pick out just the right drop earrings, pink



community by helping young women this way - and besides, it's fun," said Hadfield. Do you have a prom dress hanging in your closet? What about matching shoes and evening bag? You can drop these items off at the Kozlov Centre's administration offices downstairs, across from the food court, at The Bridal Wreath, 174 Bayfield St., or any Cotty's or Wright's Dry Cleaners.

lipstick and spiky black heels to go with their chosen gown "The enthusiasm on the girls' faces - it's pretty overwhelming," said Marie Marasovich, who helps at a similar project in western Canada. Local businesses have been jumping in and quickly responding to the call. Ballroom Blitz has accepted black short evening dresses, assorted bridesmaid dresses, purple flowing gowns and sequined blue and pink formal gowns. The Bridal Wreath kicked off the campaign by donating formal gowns, and Anna Webb, Marketing Director of the Kozlov Center, has created a buzz among the store-owners in the shopping mall to bring in dresses for the Ballroom Blitz.

Hadfield is excited that something as simple as donating a dress will make such a huge impact in a young woman's life. "We can all make a difference in our

Gowns should be in new or almost-new condition, dry-cleaned or laundered. Gift certificates for salon services, unopened cosmetics, shoes, evening bags, wraps, hair accessories, hair spray, jewelry and cash donations are also acceptable. The Ballroom Blitz relies solely on the generosity of the community to provide this service to students in the public school system across Simcoe County.