

Make prom season more affordable for young women with Girls Inc's Prom Prep

By Brock Weir

A new season is around the corner and, at your local high schools, prom-posals are in the air.

If high school is in your rear view mirror and you're more excited about the prospect of spring cleaning, Girls Inc of York Region has a proposal for you: help make prom more affordable for young women and men in your community through Prom Prep.

Girls Inc, which serves young women across York Region, is in the final stretch of their Prom Prep campaign, which accepts new and gently used dresses, suits and accessories for teens wanting to head to the prom, but struggling to make that a reality.

"This is our eighth annual Prom Prep," says Girls Inc's Jill Petrie. "Previously known as our Diva Ball, we decided to change the name to hopefully reach more girls in our community. We felt that the name was kind of misleading, and we've had a great response this year, so I think the name change was a good idea!"

"Our mission has always been to provide outfits and accessories to students in need of support, whether that is financial or emotional support. Especially this year, I feel like that is our main focus; in years past, it was more targeting girls with financial needs and this year we're hoping to reach more students in need of general support."

To this end, Girls Inc is partnered with the York Region District School Board to identify just where those needs are. The School Board has been a great support of the initiative since its inception, starting the very first Diva Ball before passing the baton to Girls Inc.

"Since then, we reached out to the schools to promote the program either to teachers, the prom committees and the students themselves," says Ms. Petrie. "We use social media as well, which is a huge outlet to reach students, and we use our members as well."

The precursor to Girls Inc. was founded in the United States in 1864 to provide a hand to girls and woman experiencing upheaval following the American Civil War. Guided by their foundational belief "in the inherent potential of each girl" their mandate has evolved to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world, and it has grown throughout North America.

Now in 400 communities across Canada and the United States, they focus on "the development of the whole girl, supporting mentoring and guiding girls in an affirming, pro-girl environment" where "girls learn to value their whole selves, discover and develop their inherent strengths and receive the support they need to navigate the challenges they face."

"If you're able to provide an outfit or accessories, that would be amazing," says Ms. Petrie. "It does take a community to run these sort of events. In years past, it wouldn't have been such a success without the collaboration of the different businesses who partner with us. Without their support, this event would not be possible."

Donations will be accepted through March 1 at their Newmarket location at 460 Davis Drive. For more information on the program and how you can support the drive and other Girls Inc initiatives, contact Jill Petrie at 905-830-0776 or email jill@girlsincyork.org.