

The Lifestyle of Giving Benefit

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\$4.95

Focus

Princess Project

Bay Area women play fairy godmother to Bay Area girls.

We all know about Cinderella—a girl down on her luck benefits from the wonder of a great dress and the help of a magical fairy godmother. While the story of Cinderella is a fairytale to most, several Bay Area women are making it a reality for local underprivileged high school girls. The Bay Area is home to an organization called the Princess Project, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that donates free prom dresses and accessories to San Francisco Bay Area high school girls who could not otherwise afford them. Started by Kristin Smith Knutson and Laney Whitcanack in 2002, the organization, with the help of corporate and individual donors, has played fairy godmother to over 5,000 girls.

With many families struggling to make ends meet as a result of the Bay Area's high cost of living, luxuries like prom dresses are often unattainable. The prom is considered one of the traditional American rites of passage, with millions of high school students across the country participating in the event each year. But the costs are often very high—a formal dress easily tops \$200 and tickets for the event at some schools cost more than \$100 per couple.

During the Princess Project's 2006 dress giveaway, 1,900 girls were outfitted and accessorized during two weeks of giveaway events. The girls came from 235 high schools throughout California. A majority of the girls resided in the East Bay and San Francisco; 31 percent of girls attending The Princess Project were African American, 30 percent were Latina, and 30 percent Asian American. The girls are able to choose from several thousand gowns of all different colors, sizes, fabrics, and designers. In addition, make-up artists will be providing makeovers and giving out make-up tips.

With corporate and individual support, the Princess Project hopes to outfit 2,700 underserved girls with gowns and accessories for the prom in 2007. The dresses will be distributed free-of-charge to high school girls at two fun-filled "dress giveaway" events on March 17 and March 24. In addition to collecting dresses and accessories, the Princess Project must raise \$50,000 to cover operating expenses. For more information visit PrincessProject.org.

—Kara Emry

