

Los Angeles Times

Glamour Gowns event gives prom dresses and accessories to teens living in foster care

April 20, 2011 | 10:00 am

Prom season incites the same frenzy for teenage girls that a bride-to-be has when buzzing around town looking for the perfect wedding gown or some celebrities experience when gearing up for an awards show — what are they going to wear and how amazing can they possibly look?

But for teens living in the foster care system, a silk charmeuse dress or asymmetrical cocktail number *a la* Kim Kardashian is not an easy get and there are no high-profile stylists to pull them runway dresses from a showroom rack that can be returned once the evening is over.



But last Saturday's Glamour Gowns event, put on by [CASA of Los Angeles](#), was aimed at providing girls living in foster care with the same princess prom experience as anyone else. "We try to provide them with

the dream prom that most girls take for granted," said CASA Executive Director Dilys Tosteson Garcia, who expected more than 600 girls to attend the 10th annual event.

A large ballroom in the Los Angeles Convention Center was transformed into a one-stop prom boutique. Each girl was paired with a personal shopper who helped them pick out a dress and took them around to different stations where they could get shoes from Chinese Laundry, bras from Jenette Bras, and hit up tables lined with jewelry and evening bags.



Dress styles ran the gamut, but details like sequins, bows and tulle were strong throughout the lineup of colorful frocks. "I like the purple one. I like big bows!" said 17-year-old Melissa Gamboa, who will be attending her junior prom at Workman High School in La Puente. [Masquerade](#) dress company donated around 600 dresses, which were all arranged by size and came in an array of colors.

Melissa chose a frilly purple dress with a large bow on the front, silver strappy heels, purple chandelier earrings and a set of deep purple beaded bracelets while her best friend, 16-year-old Laura Gastelum, focused on the accessories. "The best part was the jewelry," said Laura, who is attending her junior prom at Walnut High. "You can never go wrong with jewelry."

Making sure the girls had all the proper special occasion dress accoutrement, Jenette Goldstein of [Jenette Bras](#) and a team of volunteers were on hand to fit them and find the right underpinnings for their dress. "As soon as I heard that there was a lack of bras at Glamour Gowns, and especially in the larger cup sizes, I started holding fundraising

events at my store and hitting up my suppliers for donations," said Goldstein. "My customers packed the shop on volunteer training day. This cause is close to our hearts, literally! They all have prom horror stories involving the impossible search for a workable strapless bra above a D cup. Jenette Bras aims to provide not only the bra for the day, but also some bra smarts for a lifetime."



[Chinese Laundry](#), participating for a fourth year, set up a boutique with more than 400 pairs of shoes. "Prom is such a significant milestone in a young woman's life and we are thrilled with the opportunity to do our part to help make their night one that they won't forget," said Executive Vice President Stewart Goldman.

Also on hand were four seamstresses to make sure each girl had a dress that fit just right. And, of course, the girls were given beauty bags filled with skin care and makeup products to perfect their prom pouts.



"This event is a self-esteem builder," said Tosteson Garcia "You want them to blossom when they see that, yes, they do in fact look beautiful."

-- Melissa Magsaysay

Photos: The Glamour Gowns event at the Los Angeles Convention Center on April 16. Credit: Denise Malone