

Belle of the Ball boutique outfits nearly 400 young women with free prom dresses

ON SATURDAY, APRIL 17, nearly 400 high school girls filed into the Holmes Sports Center at Simmons College in Boston with dreams of going to their prom. When they left the "invitation-only" Belle of the Ball boutique, they had a beautiful prom gown to help make the dreams come true.

Anton's Cleaners sponsored the sixth annual Belle of the Ball prom dress boutique, which donates prom gowns to qualified high school juniors and seniors who cannot afford to go to their prom. On display were close to 2,000 donated and professionally dry-cleaned dresses, as well as an exciting assortment of shoes, jewelry, make-up and prom-related accessories to make that special night perfect.

More than 300 volunteers, many serving as personal shoppers, assisted each girl. Volunteers came from the Junior League of Boston,

the Young Black Women's Society, Emmanuel College, the Boston Bruins' Ice Girls and Boston University, while others were individuals committed to creating a memorable day for the girls.

"It's hard to explain the feeling you get when you see the look on the faces of these young women when you know they found the perfect dress," says Arthur Anton, Jr., COO of Anton's Cleaners. "Even in the sixth year, that feeling never fades. Many of the dresses that are donated are elegant, and the girls feel so special from the attention showed them by our dedicated volunteers."

Linda Queripel, who referred students from Boston Adult Technical Academy, said, "Our students were so excited and pleased by the royal treatment they were given. The gowns were awesome and (BALL Pg. 7)

the whole experience is one they will remember forever."

Those sentiments were echoed by Sandra Deneault, the participant registration desk captain, who said: "The very first girl that came in to register was very shy. But when she came out with her

gown on and came over to the registration desk to show us how pretty the dress was, she was smiling from ear to ear."

Mary Lou Andre, a professional wardrobe consultant and founder and president of dressingwell.com, trained the personal shoppers. She and her team were on hand throughout the day to guide volunteers by giving advice on fit, length, style and fabric type.

Invitations to the boutique were arranged through a Referral Partners program of 147 public and private agencies throughout the Boston area and surrounding suburbs, including guidance counselors, teachers and social service agency representatives.

Contributing to the event's success were Belle of the Ball's Promotional Partners, including Jordan's Furniture, FOX25 TV, and KISS-108/JAM'N-94.5, in addition to 76 schools and businesses that collected dresses.

Anton's Cleaners is a family-owned business with 44 stores in eastern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire, and the recipient of the Massachusetts Family Business Award. To locate an Anton's Cleaners near you, visit www.anton.com.

