

Cinderella's Corner

Prom and Wedding Expo

BY COURTNEY LINDWALL

Kelly Deese likes things fancy.

She likes big dresses, up-dos and glamour shots. She wants done-up girls to have special nights, with slow dances, corsages and dates that come to the door. Deese works hard to make sure every girl can have that prom night, fancy as ever — because she never had one of her own.

Deese is organizing the Third Annual Lions Club Prom and

Wedding Expo on Jan. 12, an event to bring together local vendors who will showcase products such as wedding cakes, jewelry, tuxes and flowers.

But for Deese, the most important part of the event will be the rack of donated prom and wedding dresses, free to girls who cannot afford one themselves. Already, Deese has collected more than 40 dresses, which will be displayed in "Cinderella's Corner" at the event.

"They come up and give you a big ol' hug," Deese said. "They're happy to find the perfect dress

because they didn't have any money to get one."

Deese, who did not attend her prom, said missing that experience has inspired her to help other girls make their day memorable.

The event is sponsored by the Lions Club of High Springs and All Creations Salon, which Deese runs. It is being held at the Fellowship Church this year, a new and bigger venue that can hold up to 300 people. The first event brought out around 150.

For Deese, donating prom dresses

PHOTO COURTESY OF KELLY DEESE and COURTNEY LINDWALL

TOP: A wedding party celebrates the special day, with polka dot bridesmaid dresses received from the expo.

OPPOSITE: Kelly Deese stands with one of this year's new wedding dresses that is up for raffle. Other items for the raffle include a four-party bridal hair service and gift baskets.





is a long-standing family tradition.

Her daughter, Crystal Castoral, went to prom three times — during her sophomore, junior and senior years with her then-boyfriend and current husband, Drew.

"My mom bought me my nice, expensive dress," Castoral said.

Prom was an important rite of passage, Castoral said, like her wedding was, just a few years later.

"I didn't just want to leave," she said. "I wanted to stay the whole night."

But back at the salon, girls would come in and say they could not afford to go, Deese said. Prom dresses usually cost at least \$100. If they are

new and not on sale, they can easily cost up to \$300, she said. That is not including shoes, makeup and hair — expenses that begin to add up.

So, Deese began loaning out her daughter's old dresses to any girl who needed one.

"That dress must've been worn about 20 times," Deese said.

Deese chose local vendors as a way to highlight small businesses and give back to her community, she said, especially when it is so hard to go up against Gainesville competition.

"They're going to Gainesville because they can get anything at the mall," she said.

She instead pulled vendors from small towns such as High Springs, Newberry, Lake Butler and Alachua. She is only charging a fifth of what Gainesville wedding expos typically charge for a table, she said — \$55 compared to typically \$250 per booth.

"It's much better to know you're supporting where you are," she said.

While most of the donated dresses are for proms, most of the vendors focus on weddings. While some vendors do get bookings at the event, it is mostly an opportunity to get names out to couples that are still planning.

Dees believes in having a wedding that is special, she said.

Al Mincey Site Prep
352-538-1252
— COMMERCIAL & RESIDENTIAL —
Land Clearing • Sink Hole Repair
Driveway Culverts
Foundations Filled
Ponds Dug
Fill Dirt
Limerock
Demolition & more
Locally Owned Sand Pit • Since 1986
www.AlMinceySitePrep.com

BITS & SPURS TACK
More than a tack store
Western & English Tack • Grooming
Supplies • Riding Apparel • Consignment
352.472.0122
www.BitsandSpurTack.com 16245 W. Newberry RD

PHOTO BY COURTNEY LINDWALL

Crystal Castoral, Karen Boling and Lisa Boling clad in donated dresses outside the All Creations Salon, which will be doing free makeup and hair tutorials during the Prom and Wedding Expo.

Back in 2001, Castoral, now 30, was still dating her high school sweetheart. They had plans for marriage, she said, but had not set a date. Drew was in the military at the time. Then, Sept. 11 happened. Castoral knew that she would want to get married before he was deployed, but they were not sure how much time they had together. Crystal was going to just have a civil ceremony — but Deese did not want her daughter to miss out on the traditional wedding. So they planned a small wedding in less than 30 days. Castoral, then 19, got to ring the wedding bell at the church.

"What comes after prom is their wedding," Castoral said. "It's every girl's fairy tale dream to



browse dresses."

The event, which is free to the public, is a way to give back to the community — both to the girls who are taking home the dresses, and to the local businesses that need the support. It is open from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Two new wedding dresses will also be given as raffle prizes, among other things.

Dress donations can be made at any time up to the event at Deese's

All Creations Salon in High Springs. In particular, they would like more plus-sized donations. The High Springs Lions Club also provides a tax-deduction receipt to anyone who brings in a dress.

"Proms are just special," Deese said, "and I want to make sure every little girl has one." ■

The 3rd Annual Lions Club Prom and Wedding Expo will be held on January 12 at the Fellowship Church in High Springs

Welcome Home Mandarin Coriander

A product display featuring various items from the Thymes Mandarin Coriander collection. It includes a large gold rectangular box, a smaller gold rectangular box, a clear glass reed diffuser bottle with a gold cap, a silver spray bottle with an orange label, a lit candle in a clear glass jar with a green and gold patterned label, and a decorative orange and gold object.

THYMES
BATH + BODY

VOTIVO
CANDLES

CRABTREE & EVELYN
LOTIONS, CANDLES, SOAPS

PADDYWAX
DIFUSERS, CANDLES

EUROPEAN SOAPS
BATH + BODY

ARCHIPELAGO CANDLES

PADDIWHACK

ART... FOR THE GOOD LIFE

4122 NW 16TH Blvd. Gainesville • Mon-Sat 10-7 Sun 11-5
352-336-3175 • www.paddiwhack.com