

Bippity, boppity, boo: Boutique bestowing ballgowns

December 17, 2019



Fairy godmothers don't exist only in faraway kingdoms and Disney movies. They're also in Crescent City, at least during the social seasons.

The Fairy Godmother Boutique, coordinated by a group of 12 local women, is back in town and ready to make wishes come true.

Twice a year, the boutique opens for the purpose of giving prom and winter ball dresses to high school students who might have difficulty affording them.

Local residents donate formal dresses, make-up, jewelry and accessories, then the students can come by the boutique to find outfits for their magical night.

“We really try to make it a special boutique experience for the girls, too, so when they come and find the dress they want, we wrap it up for them. We put their accessories in a bag complete with tissue paper,” said Valerie Starkey, one of the boutique’s founders.

The dozen friends held the boutique’s opening reception for the winter ball season last Wednesday and invited visiting delegates from Crescent City’s Japanese sister city, Rikuzentakata, to attend.

The delegates had visited the boutique when it first opened three years ago, but it has developed considerably since then. The delegates have asked repeatedly about the status of the pop-up shop, according to Lezlie Duncan, one of its founders.

“So that’s why we made sure they came through, so they could see now that we really actually are set up and doing it,” Duncan said.

Three years later, the boutique has tables adorned with gloves, necklaces and earrings, with lines of dresses hanging from the rustic walls of downtown store Six Degrees of Celebration’s backroom.

As the delegates began their recent downtown shopping spree - a regular during their visits - they made sure to see the expanded boutique. And the women were proud to show it off to their sister-city friends.

The 12 women behind the boutique are friends from high school. They refer to themselves as the “eighties ladies,” although many local high school students could refer to them as their fairy godmothers. Last year, they gave out 53 dresses for the prom and winter balls.

“We all graduated high school together, some of them in 1984, us youngin’s in 1985,” said Starkey. “We’ve just reconnected and redeveloped our friendship, and so twice a year, we get together to do this.”

She said the project has considerable community support and clothing donations. “It’s just amazing, this community did this,” Starkey said. “We organized it, but it’s the community that really has made this happen.”

The boutique will be open for high school students, who have a school ID, through Jan. 8 to pick up dresses for the winter ball. Hours are 4-6 p.m. on Wednesdays, 1-4 p.m. on Saturdays, or by appointment at 707-490-9177.

Also available are cosmetics, shoes and jewelry. Donations are still being accepted from the community.