

Sarasota Classified/Teachers Association

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Teachers group takes dress donation drive year-round

"Cinderella's Closet" is starting its dress donation drive now, three months earlier than ever before, and expanding beyond just Prom to year-round.

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SARASOTA – “Cinderella’s Closet” is starting its annual call for dresses three months earlier this year, in October instead of January.

The Closet is also preparing to expand to a year-round program providing “dressy” dresses to teens for all kinds of school dances – not just Prom in the spring, but also Homecoming in the fall, and holiday dances.

“We realized, when we were approached by a nonprofit school this fall, that girls are in need are all year round,” said Pat Gardner, president of the Sarasota Classified Teachers Association, which sponsors the annual dress donation and giveaway program.

The decision to start collecting dresses much earlier also grew out of increased, year-round inquiries from people who want to donate dresses -- including on the Closet’s Facebook page, “Free Prom Gowns in SRQ.”

“When do you start collecting gowns?” wrote one woman in late September. “Cleaning out my closet, have tons of prom/homecoming dresses!” Another woman wrote in July, “I have gowns to donate! How do I get them to you?”

Dress donations can be delivered to the SCTA headquarters, 4675 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, between 8 a.m. and noon, and 1 to 4 p.m., any weekday. “We accept any formal, cocktail, sorority or dressy dresses that anyone would like to donate – and shoes, jewelry, and accessories!” Gardner said. “We encourage every woman to look in the back of her closet; we bet you’ll find a couple of dresses you’ll never wear again. Bring them in!”

Sarasota has five traditional public high schools that hold school dances year-round. Needy students from private and charter high schools are also welcome at the Closet, founded six years ago by SCTA Vice President Christine Mayer. The Closet posts a schedule every year of hours during which teenage girls can try on and choose dresses and accessories if their families are struggling to purchase them.

Watch www.sctaonline.org for news on the Closet’s expanded hours for 2016.