

Program offers a silver lining for some prom-goers

By Amy Morissette, Staff Writer

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Photo: Autumn Driscoll / Connecticut Post |

It's almost prom season: the time of year when high school guys are in search of the perfect date and the girls are in search of the perfect dress.

Those prom dresses can often be pricey and almost impossible for some to afford. But, thanks to the efforts of two local churches, many girls will get the chance to wear the perfect dress to their prom free of charge.

The Silver Lining Prom Dress and Expo was founded by Rev. [Mary Anne Osborn](#) in 2006 and is held every year at St. John's Episcopal Church in Bridgeport and St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Fairfield.

Alberta J. Vargas is coordinating this year's expo and said she is thrilled to be a part of such an "amazing" event.

"Last year was the grand mommy of all prom dress expos for us," she said. "There were two in Bridgeport and one in Ansonia, and between the two we distributed approximately 550 dresses."

Vargas said last year was the biggest the event she ever had, offering an enormous number of dresses. They collected almost 1,000 dresses last year, she said, and while only 550 of them were distributed to the girls, the remaining dresses didn't go to waste.

"Any of the leftovers aren't

really left over," said Vargas. "We redirect the remainder to other charitable organizations throughout the year." Vargas said many local bridal salons donate brand new dresses to the expo, as well as individuals who no longer need their dresses. All the dresses they receive are in excellent, if not perfect, condition, she said.

"Half of them are individual donations from community members, young and old," said Vargas. "The recycled dresses we feature are nearly indistinguishable from the new ones and there are a variety of organizations that contribute by having dress drives." While in the past the event was earmarked for girls from Fairfield County and the Naugatuck Valley, Vargas said she wants to reach out beyond that this year. Girls from all over the state are welcome at the expo, she said. "Everyone is invited," she said, noting that the locations are accessible by both bus and train.

"I try to grow it a little more every year and draw girls from all over," said Vargas. "We do some networking in the schools, and found there is a need in Milford and New Haven."

Meral Prewit of Covenant to Care for Children is helping organize the event, Vargas said. Prewit couldn't be reached for comment.

Dress donations can be dropped off at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 661 Old Post Road, Fairfield, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and weekends 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Donations also will be accepted at [Christ Episcopal Church](#), 2000 Main St., Stratford, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon, and Fridays and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m..

The Silver Lining Prom Dress and Recycle Expo will be held on April 9, 10, and 11 at St. John's Episcopal Church in Bridgeport and St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Fairfield.

For more information, call 203-259-3013.

