

creating local fairytales

Once upon a time Zeta Phi Beta collected dresses to create happily ever afters

David Turkel
Reporter

Zeta Phi Beta sorority is putting a twist on a classic story with its Cinderella Project. By collecting prom

dresses for young women in the Burlington community who may not be able to afford one on their own, the sorority is helping create a fairytale for more than 150 high school girls.

The Cinderella Project started at Hugh M. Cummings High School in Burlington. Rhonda Robinson, a guidance counselor at Cummings, started what she called "Prom Closet" after coming to the school seven

years ago, with the goal of providing free prom dresses to students.

County," Simunyu said. She said she has a particular enthusiasm for the Cinderella Project.

"It's an extremely neat way to foster effective change in the local community," she said.

Simunyu said the project will provide long-term benefits for the women it helps.

"As an organization founded on strong woman empowerment values we strive to provide the tools young women can use to be the leaders of their community, schools and future," she said.

While collecting dresses is at the heart of the Cinderella Project, Simunyu and the rest of Zeta Phi Beta have expanded on the original concept by creating a Boutique Day, which would allow interaction between the sorority and the recipients of the dresses.

"I don't want to merely drop off a big bag of dresses," Simunyu said. "I wanted the girls to feel special."

"Boutique Day" featured two educational workshops, a performance by the campus hip-hop group Elon's Finest, lunch, prizes and gifts. The boutique was then opened for the girls, and they were allowed to take home multiple dresses. In addition, a consultant from makeup company Mary Kay was available to give prom

makeup pointers, and all of the girls took home a Sephora goodie bag.

According to Simunyu, Boutique Day and the Cinderella Project in general have been successful with the young women of the Burlington community that it benefits.

"A lot of the young women were very thankful and were happy to have had the opportunity to participate in the event," she said.

Robinson agreed. "It was a wonderful day," she said. "The students raved about the event and parents were more than complimentary of the activity."

Last year, Zeta Phi Beta was able to collect more than 150 dresses for this project. This year, with Graham High School added to the program, their goal has increased.

"To increase awareness of the cause, we are using as many marketing tactics as we can," Simunyu said.

The sorority chapter has started a Facebook and Twitter account for the event under the name "Tiara Couture."

"Ultimately, I'm only hoping to have as much success as we had last year," Simunyu said.



Junior Samantha Simunyu, Zeta Phi Beta president, and senior Shakinah Simeona, treasurer, will be in Moseley on November 11. They will wear the prom dresses to draw attention to their cause.

MERISSA BLITZ | Staff Photographer

Young talent wins first place in national film contest

Chalkboard animation video earns high school junior \$1,000 scholarship prize

Rebecca Wickel
Design Editor

It only took a chalkboard, camera, computer and four hours to earn \$1,000.

In September, IntelliVOL, a web-based tracking and reporting system for community service hours, sponsored a scholarship contest for high school students. Western Alamance High School junior Eric Lewis took home first prize for his two-minute chalkboard animation.

"I thought I'd have a good chance of getting at least one of the three prizes but I wasn't sure," Lewis said. "It was a good feeling. I've won other things before, it makes me happy for the rest of the day."

Without any formal video editing instruction, Lewis has a lot to be proud of.

"When I first got a camera five years ago I recorded myself doing stupid stuff like playing with fire," he said. "I just edited it from there and learned what I know along the way."

Despite this unconventional education, Lewis's video impressed IntelliVOL President and CEO Michele Pitman.

"Eric's chalkboard drawing message was simple and effective," Pitman said. "The winning videos communicated the importance of community service through drawings, personal experiences, music and text. They were all very creative."

Two other students were awarded scholarships for their entries and another received an honorable mention. Pitman said all the entries

were impressive.

"Selecting the winners was a difficult task because there were so many that were so great," she said. "Ultimately, each of the winners exhibited a different angle on community service yet they all communicated a message of the benefits of taking action in the community to make a positive difference in the lives of those around them and to strengthen the community that the live in."

The x2VOL video contest was not the first scholarship Lewis grabbed. During his sophomore year, he realized the Internet had thousands of opportunities for winning prize money.

"I've placed in for our five contests and I've only won twice," Lewis said. "But I've entered 30 or 40 contests in the past year."

Lewis has won more than \$3,500 in prize money from organizations such as DonorsChoose.org and RevereAmerica.org. He decided to invest his money in

buying equipment to continue making videos.

"The first camera I had was a Flip video camera, and I got that by selling Pokemon cards I had as a kid," Lewis said. "I used it to enter a contest and I won, so with that I bought a computer, a camera and some other stuff. It was an investment to enter another contest to get an even better camera."

With this new equipment, Lewis won another contest and put the prize money toward a new microphone. Although he considers these purchases useful for college, he will not be saving specifically for tuition yet.

"I'm waiting for the results of five contests right now," he said. "There's some that you can only spend the money on college, but the other ones I'm going to save for a car and a laptop, a few things that I'm trying to do before saving for college."

Lewis's goal is to save enough for half his tuition, so he can continue to earn scholarships and awards during his junior and senior years at university.

He hopes to attend Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., to pursue his interests in theater and video.

"I'm actually going there next week to visit for the first time," Lewis said. "I've heard about it, and I've watched every single video they have on YouTube, like 400 videos this summer."

Whatever he decides to study in school, Lewis expects to do great things. In his x2VOL scholarship submission, he emphasized the importance of community and cooperation. IntelliVOL hopes he will continue to value these ideals.

"We are very happy to provide Eric with a \$1,000 scholarship to pursue his college education," Pitman said. "Students like Eric understand that they can make a difference through service."



Western Alamance High School junior Eric Lewis won \$1,000 in a national video competition. His chalkboard animation film was created without any formal video training.

MERISSA BLITZ | Staff Photographer