
For immediate release

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Valley school resurrects a well-renown graduation garment donation project

COMOX VALLEY, B.C. – A team of students and staff at G.P. Vanier Secondary School have picked up the torch to continue an important donation project to outfit graduates in style.

Known as the Cinderella/Prince Charming Project, the former community-run program is designed to ensure every graduating student in the District has access to special attire to make their graduation ceremony stylish, memorable and affordable.

The project aims to tackle the stigma attached to underprivileged students by giving everyone the opportunity to wear a gown or suit on graduation day without the financial challenges associated with purchasing a brand new outfit or having one special made for their milestone event.

Lee McKillican, vice principal, was approached by a volunteer community-based organization asking if Vanier Secondary would like several grad items, most of which was acquired from store owners of Carosel Consignment upon closing its Courtenay business.

The school took receipt a dozen totes and bins full of gowns, shoes, suits, ties, and accessories amounting to approximately 300 garments. McKillican approached a team of staff asking whether they would like to take on the project and have it operational for the Class of 2021.

Vanier staff Kelley Giorgianni and Susan Quinton accepted to lead the project with the assistance from fellow Vanier support staff and teachers, as well as students to support in various ways including the Construction Trades Sample students who built clothing racks.

Rene Lanoix, District Custodial Manager was approached and willing to support the project by offering to ozonate the clothing to remove any odors, bacteria or moisture that may have accumulated in totes. Lanoix is now investigating a suitable storage location at one of the school sites to house the garments temporarily.

“It has been extremely advantageous and appreciated to have the immediate support of the District to help us prepare the garments and get them ready to distribute,” explained Giorgianni. “Now it is a matter of preparing the gowns and suits by steaming them or dry clean where needed to have ready for when the students can come and select an outfit.”

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The school aims to have the outfits ready for mid April, an ideal time to begin outfitting graduates. To get to that stage, however, requires additional resources. Vanier is in need of volunteers willing to dedicate a few hours of time to steam outfits

“Any help we can get is so appreciated. We could use another clothing steamer or two, more volunteer hours, and many more hangers and garment racks to be completely ready after Spring Break.

The school will also accept grad clothing and accessories, particularly clean shirts for men. Financial donations are also accepted to help offset costs to dry clean items.

The Cinderella/Prince Charming Project will be run by Vanier, however, any graduating students throughout the District from one of the other secondary schools in need of an outfit can benefit from the project.

Giorgianni stresses that the project is not about who can or cannot afford an outfit or where they may have acquired the dress.

“Anyone who wants to pick out a gown or a suite can and will be given the choice to keep it or return it, explained Giorgianni. “Everyone deserves to feel the magic of this special day and we want to make that happen for all our graduates.”

Although COVID has changed the scope in which graduation ceremonies are held, graduates are still participating in a unique physical-distancing ceremony, as was experienced in June 2020, using outdoor settings complete with car parades and drive-by diploma pick-ups.

To donate or to volunteer, contact G.P. Vanier Secondary office 250-338-9262 or 250-338-2110. Alternatively, send a message via email to kelly.giorgianni@sd71.bc.ca.

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Image Credit: Comox Valley Schools