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Mom's Night Out *KATHRIN CHAVEZ* STAFF

Pampering by downtown merchants gives boost to busy parents
By KATHRIN CHAVEZ

Staff Writer

FRANKLIN -- Evette Haynes has lived in Franklin all her life, but has never shopped downtown.

"I heard it was so expensive," Haynes said.

But last Tuesday, Haynes, a single mother of two, and five other single mothers had the opportunity to enjoy downtown's services and wares with free makeovers, clothes, jewelry and other goodies from downtown merchants.

Their "Mom's Night Out" was the idea and work of Jessica Perry and Lindsay Packer, who are rather more familiar with downtown Franklin.

"We were having chocolate martinis at Sandy's, just the two of us," Perry said. "I have two children, and she is married with no children. Lindsay said she sees me working so hard. Being a parent, you don't even have time to get your hair done. That conversation went on into talking about single moms and how much more of a struggle they have. We decided we wanted to do something for deserving single mothers."

The idea for a night of pampering was born.

Perry started right away.

"I'm a public relations major. I thought, 'We can do this thing.' I give all the glory to God because he was the one who made this all happen," Perry said.

God did have a little help.

Perry started with a salon. She knew Richard Dion of Dion's South Hair Salon on Main Street. Although she could only afford to go the salon on the nights Dion had students cutting hair, she had struck up a friendship with the owner.

"I started with Richard. I knew if we had the salon on board, everything else would fall into place. I knew God would provide. I asked him, and Richard said 'How many?' I hadn't even thought about that, but I pulled a number out of my head -- 'A half-dozen?' Then he asked me when. I said, 'August?' Perry said.

Dion, who moved here from California 15 years ago, said he was taken with the project at once. He said he would close the salon for the evening, provide his staff and give free haircuts, massages, hair products, manicures and pedicures.

"We're always looking for opportunities to bless this area. This area has blessed us so much, it would be silly and stupid and selfish not to give back to it," Dion said.

Perry asked Mercy Children's Clinic, which provides pediatric care for uninsured and underinsured children, for six names of women they thought deserved a night out.

She started knocking on downtown doors and presented business owners with the idea.

Despite her optimism, the response was even more than she expected.

Enjoue gave the women clothes and What's In Store provided \$30 gift cards for accessories. The Cellar donated shoes for the women, Rock Paper Scissors donated monogrammed stationery and Bathos sent large baskets of fragrant items. TrustCore of Brentwood is providing \$20 gift cards to Target for school supplies.

Gift certificates were given by Ben & Jerry's, Franklin Cinema and Franklin Mercantile Co. The Registry donated a large basket of goodies. Mellow Mushroom provided pizza for the evening and gave gift certificates for the women to use later with their families.

The Junior Auxiliary of Franklin, which provides meals during sessions of Mercy Children's Clinic's Moms Mentoring Moms program, put together gift baskets of toiletries, candles and books donated by Dave and Sharon Ramsey and LifeWay Christian Stores. Some of Tuesday night's participants are members of the mentoring program.

"This is a testament to downtown Franklin, that all these shops came together for these women. And they are all small shops and most of them are pretty new. They're trying to make ends meet and pay their bills. Downtown Franklin banded together to support this. That's why people want to move to Franklin. That's why people love it," Perry said.

For Donna Robinson, the highlight of the evening was a large tray of truffles and pitcher of frozen hot chocolate provided by The Cocoa Tree. Her two daughters, waiting for a ride with a friend, peeked excitedly through the salon's front window to see what magic would be wrought on their mother, who is a nurse at the Mercy clinic.

Haynes said her children also were thrilled for their mother.

"This is a blessing. I can't believe it. It's a dream to be pampered. My two kids are 12 and 9 years old. They were so excited for me. They literally pushed me out the door," Haynes said.

Veronica Cropper agreed with Haynes' assessment. Cropper has four children, ages 12 and 8 and 11-year-old twins.

"It's a blessing that other people think about single moms, that they realize how hard it can be and how little time you have. This is kind of treat for us, to have something like this done," Cropper said.

PHOTOS BY STEVEN S. HARMAN / STAFF:

Stylist Erica Kirsch, left, colors Veronica's Cropper's hair at Dion's South Hair Design in Franklin last Tuesday. Phyl Harper has her hair styled by Heather Gardner and her hands massaged by Kevin Wade.

Evette Haynes, right, of Franklin gets a manicure from Rheonna Pavusa at Dion's South Hair Design during a Mom's Night Out.

SUBMITTED PHOTO:

All decked with new clothes and new hairdoes, moms celebrate their Mom's Night Out. From left, standing, are Evette Haynes, Brooke Willis, Katrina Green and Veronica Cropper. From left, in front, are Phyl Harper, Jessica Perry and Donna Robinson.

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