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CONTACT:

Trina Fleming, VP of Marketing & Communications

WHW (Women Helping Women/Men2Work)

1800 East McFadden Avenue, Suite 1A, Santa Ana, CA 92705

(949) 631-2333 X304

Email: trinaf@whw.org

www.whw.org

Orange County Non-Profits Make Prom Dreams a Reality for At-Risk Teens

Girls Inc. of Orange County, Orangewood Children's Foundation, Orange Coast College and WHW (Women Helping Women/Men2Work) host seventh annual 'Belle of the Ball' event.

SANTA ANA, CALIF. (March 25, 2014)— Four Orange County-based non-profits teamed up to host the seventh annual 'Belle of the Ball' event at Orange Coast College on Saturday, March 23, 2014. Girls Inc. of Orange County, Orangewood Children's Foundation, Orange Coast College and WHW (Women Helping Women/ Men2Work) collaborated to provide a day of empowerment which allowed 325 at-risk teens and foster youth to receive the necessities and frills in order to attend their prom in style and gleaming with confidence.



The day started with breakfast and an inspiring kick-off message by Irvina Kanarek, Executive Director and Founder of Rewrite Beautiful, a nonprofit organization that works to help girls focus on their gifts and talents rather than on how their bodies look. With the help of over 300 community volunteers, the Belles were then treated to shopping for prom dresses, shoes, handbags and jewelry; a workshop on skin care and make-up with volunteer make-up artists; a workshop on fostering a positive body image and an interactive workshop on professional styling in preparation for the young ladies' first job search. The day, which ended with a Pizza Party, was provided absolutely free of charge to all attending girls.

"This event is aimed to empower impressionable young ladies to improve their self-esteem, broaden their scope of possibilities and to provide them with a prom dress and accessories that their families may not otherwise be able to afford due to limited financial resources," said Robyn Williams, Director of Programs at WHW. "The best part is that teenage girls are exposed to the possibilities of what their future may hold on a college campus."

Over the course of eight months, a twenty-five person event committee consisting of representatives from each of the four agencies pooled their resources and secured over \$500,000 worth of in-kind and financial sponsorships for the event. Top sponsors included Enzoani, DSW Shoes, Shelter Partnership, Forever 21, Cookie Lee, Kendra Scott, Physician's Formula, UPS and National Charity League (Newport-Harbor). All in all, the teens were provided with a selection of 2,337 dresses, 1,630 pairs of shoes, 982 pieces of jewelry, 439 purses and 400 make-up goodie bags. One Belle exclaimed, "I loved attending Belle! The opening speaker (Irvina) helped set the tone for the day...she spoke about re-writing your own rules about beauty and the workshops I participated in helped reinforce this message. My dress is also beautiful!!! Thank you so much for this great opportunity!"



Belle of the Ball was established in 2008 as a day of self-esteem for at-risk girls throughout Orange County. The goal was to allow young girls the opportunity to attend their high school prom despite their financial or social situations. Through the years, the event has served more than 1,600 girls and continues to grow.

About the Agencies

Girls Inc. of Orange County

Girls Inc.® of Orange County positively changes the lives of 4,500 girls, ages 4 1/2 to 18, each year, by providing year-round holistic, compensatory, and intentional programming focusing on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math). Girls Inc. of Orange County has been a respected member of the non-profit community for almost 60 years. The mission of Girls Inc. is to inspire all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. We put our mission into practice through the Girls Inc. experience that equips girls to navigate gender, economic, and social barriers and grow into healthy, educated and independent adults. For more information, please visit www.girlsinc-oc.org.

Orangewood Children's Foundation

Orangewood Children's Foundation is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1981. Our mission is to provide life-changing programs and one-on-one support for abused and neglected children and at-risk families to end the cycle of child abuse. Our programs focus on the areas of education, supportive services, life-stage transition and child abuse prevention. Support for our programs is based on our successful outcomes due to our extensive understanding of the needs of our clients and effective partnerships with public and private organizations. In our history we have helped over 74,000 kids find their wings and soar. Beyond our programs, for thousands in our communities Orangewood means "family," "opportunity" and "hope." Learn how you can help at www.orangewoodfoundation.org.

Orange Coast College

Orange Coast College, founded in 1947, is one of the nation's top transfer schools. For combined transfers to the UC/CSU system, OCC ranks #1 in Orange County. With a student population of 25,000, OCC provides exemplary programs leading to Associate in Arts degrees, Associate in Science degrees, and 135 career programs, including one of the nation's largest and most acclaimed public nautical programs. In addition, the College offers more than 20 men's and women's sports, full student government, and on-campus arts and entertainment. The college's 164-acre campus is located in the heart of Costa Mesa. For complete details about OCC, visit www.orangecoastcollege.edu.

WHW (Women Helping Women/Men2Work)

WHW is a 501(c)(3) whose mission is to provide comprehensive employment support services to empower disadvantaged men, women and teens to achieve economic self-sufficiency through employment success and who has served over 40,000 clients since 1993. WHW's 20 year Employment Success Program includes resume and interviewing skills, Employment Readiness Services, educational workshops, computer classes, professional clothing appropriate for interviews and transportation services. Supported by over 1000 volunteers and United Way, WHW's services are always at no charge or obligation to clients and referring non-profit partners. For more information on WHW and its Employment Success Program, go to www.whw.org.

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