

<https://www.sun-sentinel.com/2023/12/19/prom-beach-gets-a-bigger-closet-to-help-teens-pick-out-free-formal-wear/>



Correnna Benning, 19, found the perfect prom dress last year with the help of Prom Beach, a Palm Beach County nonprofit that provides free formal wear to teens from low-income families.

“I think the experience was very helpful and encouraging. (Founder and CEO) Laura (Wissa) was very adamant on making sure I found the right dress for me. She didn’t settle for any dresses that I thought were OK and not up to what I wanted. We did our best to find the closest thing to what I did want,” said Benning, who now attends Keiser University.



Wissa started [Prom Beach](#), which officially became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in August 2021, and the organization recently moved to their new showroom at 5840 Corporate Way, Suite 105, in West Palm Beach.

The 1,900-square-foot space features 9,000 items including gowns, cocktail dresses, suits, blazers, tuxedos as well accessories such as shoes, purses, jewelry, wraps, ties and new makeup. The space also includes dressing rooms, floor-to-ceiling mirrors and new, heavy duty bridal gown racks, Wissa said.

“It’s very exciting that we have our own place now to call home where the kids can come to us, and we can accommodate more kids and more agencies,” she said.



Prom Beach only partners with child services agencies such as [Adopt-A-Family of the Palm Beaches](#), [Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County](#) and [Compass](#), to name a few, and teens who come to Prom Beach must have a referral from a partner agency. Prom Beach isn't open to the general public.

"Because this way we can ensure that the gowns are getting in the hands of the kids and we don't ask for proof of need, which is how the other prom closets work, so that means bringing in your parents' paystub to show that you are in need," she said.

"They get a personal shopper to help them choose an outfit, and they leave with a free, forever outfit."

Aside from serving more teens and agencies in the bigger space, Wissa said they can have more volunteers, internships and offer additional programming such as makeup classes.



"We partnered with [Cosmetics for a Cause](#), but we've put that on hold because I really wanted to do a best face forward type of class where the kids are learning how to put on makeup not only for evening but for professional interviews because most of the kids that we serve are juniors and seniors," Wissa said.

She said some of her goals for the teens who come to Prom Beach are that she hopes they "feel beautiful and worthy of attending prom or any high school event."

"I just hope we can serve more kids, and this is life changing for them, and they feel empowered and special and loved and worthy. It is life changing when they walk out of that dressing room and they see themselves in this beautiful outfit; they change and you see it," she said.



Benning said she enjoyed the personal shopping experience and encourages anyone who may not have the financial means to get a prom dress to look into Prom Beach.

“If they are looking for a dress and they might not have the major finances for it, Prom Beach is definitely the place to go because it may not be expensive, but the material is still very beautiful and it’s worth it to go there,” she said. “I think their services are great; they’re very respectful, helpful and encouraging, and they just make sure your shopping experience is fun all around.”



Prom Beach takes donations year-round and is looking for volunteers. Visit [prombeach.org](http://prombeach.org) or email [prombeach@gmail.com](mailto:prombeach@gmail.com).

