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An Unforgettable Evening

Plenty of smiles at community's first Night To Shine event

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Night to Shine was all about giving special needs guests a prom experience like any other high school student would have; however, the prom experience went above and beyond any secondary school celebration.

It wasn't just because of the activities—though the karaoke, dancing, limo rides, catered dinner, carnival games and photo booths were thoroughly enjoyed. Rather, it was the effusive amount of support and love that ran throughout the event.

"We really wanted this to be for them. We wanted them to see that they're so loved and supported by family and friends and saying there's



Night to Shine guests were welcomed with supportive cheers from Carle Place cheerleaders and beat of the drumline.

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WHAT'S INSIDE:

With Spring Comes The Noise



Volunteers transformed the Carle Place High School gym into a beautiful prom venue, which included a DJ, photo booth and dinner stations.

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a God who loves you and we love you too," said Cheryl Kelly, the event's planning team coordinator and community care liaison at Beacon Church in East Williston. "We want them to know they're beautiful and valued."

Sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation, Night to Shine is a free prom event held in more than 540 churches around the world, serving more than 90,000 special needs guests ages 14 and over in one night. This was the inaugural year that Beacon Church in East Williston and the Carle Place community teamed up to host the event on Feb. 9 at Carle Place High School.

Upon entering the high school after their limo ride, guests were greeted with the encouraging cheers of volunteers and Carle Place cheerleaders, as well as the musical backdrop of the drumline. As they made their way down the hallway, several photographers took their photo to commemorate their special night.

Volunteers were also available to help with hair and make-up, and several shoe-shine stations were available for last-minute touch-ups. A quiet, dimly lit sensory room also catered to guests sensitive to noise and light.

Thanks to the help of almost 300 volunteers, including "buddies," special needs educators or experts, the event catered to 97 guests.

"We were so excited to take part in this special occasion and bring joy and love to these families and their children who are so deserving of it," said volunteer Michelle Lowman. "Seeing the looks on their faces, it's so evident they're having fun. They're having a blast and it's so much fun to see that."

At the end of the night, each guest was crowned prom king and queen.

"It's all about God's love and feeling that they're loved," said Anthony Bulzoni, a planning team member who helped head-up the event efforts. "If they walk away with nothing more than a memory, and it made them feel good, that to me is gold."



What's prom without photos? Guests posed for a photographer in front of a photo booth.



Volunteers greeted guests with signs.



Guests were paired up with buddies, who accompanied them throughout the event.