

AmeriCorps Student Becomes Fairy Godmother For a Day

WHAT IF YOU have a date to the prom, but can't afford a gown?

Thanks to Amanda Noble, a sophomore nursing major and member of UL Lafayette AmeriCorps, more than 100 girls received free prom dresses this spring. It was the second year she came to the aid of some real-life Cinderellas.

"Last year we gave away about 50 dresses. This year we had a goal of doubling the number of dresses we gave away and we actually exceeded that goal," she said.

Local media helped Noble spread the word that she was seeking gowns that she could offer to young women who needed them.

During the one-day giveaway, recipients got to try on the dresses. "That makes it more special. They actually get to pick out something they like," Noble explained. Some teens also received spa gift certificates that were donated for the project.

Noble wrote a \$625 grant, funded by Lafayette Junior League, to increase the capacity of the prom dress recycling program. The money helped pay for

storage racks and hangers, as well as a steam cleaner — tools to keep the donated dresses looking their best. Donors were also encouraged to pass on accessories, such as shoes and evening bags, to complete the outfits.

AmeriCorps set up a drop box at Our Lady of Wisdom Catholic Church on campus. "I'm really just amazed at the response, at how many people donated dresses and how many people came to help at the giveaway event," Noble said.

AmeriCorps members regularly participate in group activities, such as tutoring at-risk elementary school students and helping build homes through a partnership with Habitat for Humanity.

Each AmeriCorps participant is



Amanda Noble

also required to design his or her own community service project. Students must come up with an idea, then conduct research to find out whether the project is needed and feasible.

Noble drew on her hometown for inspiration. "I am from New Orleans and the (New Orleans) Hornets basketball team had a program like this. It had a big impact back

home," she said. "I did some research and couldn't find a program here."

Noble said she hopes to build on the project's success. "We'll definitely do it again next year. This program helps girls who don't have prom dresses, while at the same time promoting recycling and community service, which is what AmeriCorps is all about."

CHOICE WORDS: STUDENTS REVEAL WHAT THEY READ FOR FUN

For the first time in more than 25 years, American adults are reading more literature, according to a 2008 study by the National Endowment for the Arts. As it turns out, despite all their twittering and iPhoning, young adults – ages 18 to 24 – are leading the literary pack.

Nationwide, the younger demographic shows the biggest and most rapid increases in reading in four literary forms: novels, short stories, plays and poems. Since 2002, 18- to 24-year-olds have seen the biggest increase – 9 percent – in literary reading, and the most rapid rate of increase – 21 percent.

The literary good news left *La Louisiane* wondering what UL Lafayette students in the same age group might be reading. About 69 percent of UL Lafayette's student body are ages 18-24, enrollment records show.

So, *La Louisiane* conducted an informal survey

to find out. Of the 119 students who responded, 74 percent said they are either reading or plan to read a work of fiction that is not part of a class assignment.

UL Lafayette students who are ages 18 to 24 are finding plenty to sink their teeth into, citing more than 140 titles. Among those, books in the vampire-romance *Twilight* series – *Twilight*, *New Moon*, *Eclipse* and *Breaking Dawn* – were mentioned most often. Others are jumping on their *Harry Potter* broomsticks for literary escape.

Students are following the stories of superheroes-turned-vigilantes in the pages of the comic-book series, *Watchmen* and exploring the fantasy world created by Christopher Paolini. *Brisingr*, the third book in Paolini's *Inheritance Cycle*, features helpful dragons and elves, troublesome dwarves and a magic sword.

Students are dipping into the pages of perennial favorites such as *Catch-22*, *Slaughterhouse Five*, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*. But they are also tasting more rarified reads, including Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, the poetry of Langston Hughes, the short stories of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and the plays of William Shakespeare.

