

TOP STORY

Beacon holds its first-ever prom

By SAMANTHA NELSON Messenger Staff Journalist May 7, 2017



Messenger photo by John Halley

An attendee at Beacon School's first-ever prom graces the dance floor in a hot pink gown as she learns some dance moves.

Students at Beacon School quite literally danced under the stars during the school's first-ever prom on Friday.

Silver and blue stars hung from the gymnasium ceiling while strings of off-white lights draped over the heads of attendees into a centered location. A large cutout of a crescent moon and a fence were propped against a dark blue cloth along a wall, replicating the night sky, and blue and bright white lights lined the walls.

The decorations suited the prom's theme, "Under the Stars," and made for a spectacular night.

Faculty at Beacon decided to have the school's first prom after students who attended a prom at Carleton School in Meigs County loved it. Hiede Smart and Krystal Palmer, paraprofessionals at Beacon, were the heads of this year's prom.

The two said they started working on planning the prom at the beginning of the school year last August.

"Every other school has a prom so why don't we?" Smart said.

The two were helped by several other faculty members who volunteered their time to making prom happen, but three consistent helpers were Beacon teacher Jennifer Trotta, teaching assistant Debbie Dixon and maintenance employee Rex MacCombs, according to Smart and Palmer.

The students walked into the decorated gymnasium in the traditional prom procession. They were greeted with oohs, aahs and cheers from teachers, teaching assistants and other faculty admiring their dresses and suits, makeup and hairstyles.

Gabby Moulton, a student in the young adult class at Beacon, wore a black dress with silver sequins arranged in curling patterns all around it. Moulton said she doesn't like to dance, but she does like to mingle and talk to classmates and other prom attendees.

Chris Whitmore, a student in Beacon's Intermediate 2 class, wore a burgundy dress shirt and black pants. He said he does like to dance and even learned some new dance moves before going to prom.

Back in March, Gabby, Chris and the other Beacon students took a field trip to pick out their own dresses and suits from the Sisterhood of the Traveling Dresses, who donated the outfits to the students for their first prom.

Kroger donated corsages and boutonnieres and students from Tri-County went to Beacon earlier that morning to fix the prom attendees' hair and makeup. Sweet Arts Bakery and Café donated cookies to the prom.

Beacon students weren't the only ones in attendance at Friday's prom. At least one student from Athens and seven students from Federal Hocking high schools also came to the prom to meet and dance with new friends.

Talia Perrotti, a multiple disabilities teacher at Federal Hocking, said her students were able to choose dresses and suits in their school's prom shop. They were shown dance moves by other Federal Hocking juniors and seniors that they could show off at prom. Other students did their hair for them.

Taking the Federal Hocking students to their prom shop and to Beacon's prom was an opportunity for them to interact with other students with and students without disabilities, Perrotti said.

Being at a rural school can be difficult for her students because they are farther away from resources and other people than those who are in town. Taking them into town to meet and interact with others helps to "build connections, which is what they need," Perrotti said.

Smart and Palmer said they plan to start a budget at the beginning of the next school year for next year's prom, a new tradition that they hope to keep going at Beacon.

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