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**CHEYENNE RIVER YOUTH PROJECT® WELCOMES MORE THAN 40 TEENS
TO 9th ANNUAL “PASSION FOR FASHION” AT COKATA WICONI TEEN CENTER**

EAGLE BUTTE, SD (March 16, 2009) — The glamour of old Hollywood visited the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in South Dakota on Saturday, March 7, when 44 teenage girls converged on the Cheyenne River Youth Project® (CRYP) campus in Eagle Butte for CRYP’s ninth annual “Passion for Fashion.” Held in the project’s Cokata Wiconi Teen Center, this popular event provides support for teens on the reservation who may not have the financial means to purchase formal wear, jewelry and makeup for that most important of high-school experiences: the prom.



“This year’s ‘Old Hollywood Glamour’ theme was inspired by Audrey Hepburn and her classic quote, ‘For beautiful eyes, look for the good in others; for beautiful lips, speak only words of kindness; and for poise, walk with the knowledge that you are never alone,’” said Tammy Granados, CRYP’s youth programs assistant.

According to Julie Garreau, executive director, Hepburn’s message fit perfectly with the spirit of Passion for Fashion, which is all about building positive body image and self-esteem.



“We created Passion for Fashion to bring together young women in a healthy, safe environment where girls can be girls, and we use the opportunity to connect with them, to talk to them about the challenges they face in feeling strong, successful and proud of who they are,” she said. “We encourage them to support each other and, because intergenerational support is so important, we also connect them with adult women in our community who can be positive role models.”

This year's Passion for Fashion kicked off with a luncheon in Cokata Wiconi's Keya Cafe ("turtle" in Lakota). The young ladies enjoyed a pasta bar, courtesy of the CRST Indian Child Welfare Agency, which also supported CRYP's 20th Anniversary last fall, the 2008 Halloween celebration and 2008 Christmas parties at The Main Youth Center and Cokata Wiconi.

After lunch, Linda Kingery, a STD/HIV prevention specialist from Northern Plains Prevention, made a presentation about the steps involved in good decision-making. Kingery has seven years of experience educating women and adolescents about STD/HIV prevention.

Northern Plains Prevention donated a fruit tray and meat tray to the festivities. It also donated a Bath & Body Works set and five tanning sessions to Tam's Tan Hut; Mony High Elk was the lucky winner.

Also making a presentation was Mabel Granados, a STD/HIV coordinator/representative for Northern Plains Tribal Epidemiology Center/Aberdeen Area Tribal Chairmen's Health Board who has 20 years of experience working with women and girls.

"She conducted an ice-breaker and energizer activity with the girls that focused on decision-making as well as finding everyday things in common with their peers," Granados said. "She also readied the girls for an enjoyable afternoon!"

At 3 p.m., the participants moved into Cokata Wiconi's gymnasium to start searching for just the right prom dress. CRYP also provided several pampering stations that offered facials, pedicures and manicures given by community volunteers Joette Lee and Lacey Ducheneaux. The teens could have their make-up and hair done as well; Kathy Walters, a skilled hairdresser with more than 20 years of experience doing creative and classic hairstyles for the prom, donated her time and expertise.

"Many of the girls at this year's Passion for Fashion were attending for the very first time, and they were unaware of what the event offered," Granados said. "They didn't know that the dresses and shoes, as well as the accessories and make-up, were provided free of charge."

The teens then got to make their catwalk debut in a special Cokata Wiconi fashion show.

"The runway show was the best yet, with incredible lighting," Granados said. "All the girls participated, and they received Bath & Body Works products and jewelry as gifts.

Finally from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m., the teens performed karaoke, enjoyed snacks in the Keya Cafe and eagerly anticipated the raffle drawings.

This year's Passion for Fashion raffle winners were: Mercedes Dennis, who won the grand prize of a Baby Phat fragrance collection; and



Stephanie Herral, Phoenix Lee, Taylor Shaving, Korral Whirlwind Horse and Ettie Benoist, who won make-up kits.

“All the girls enjoyed the karaoke,” Granados recalled. “None of them were shy... they all got up and sang together!”

Garreau said that she and the CRYP staff are amazed each year at the transformation in the young women that walk through Cokata Wiconi’s doors for Passion for Fashion. By the end of the evening, she said, the teens are standing proudly in their dresses, encouraging their fellow participants in the fashion show and enjoying each other’s company.

“The transformation is beautiful to watch,” she explained. “Events like the fashion show, in particular, can be such a big step for some of the girls, but their peers support them and they do it. It becomes even more magical in that moment, because you see true courage in these young women. You see them embrace their true selves.”

Garreau said she wanted to thank the many people who supported this year’s event.

“We wouldn’t be able to host Passion for Fashion without the help of our many contributors,” she said. “We had more than 50 in-kind donors, and we raised more than \$300. Thanks to these contributions, we were able to make more than 200 dresses available. Nearly all the participating teens found the right dresses for their prom at Passion for Fashion, and local girls will continue picking up dresses throughout the spring prom season.

“We’ll put any extras toward our 2010 Passion for Fashion event,” she added.

Garreau also thanked the nine members of the community who volunteered their time on March 7, as well as the 21 parents and guardians who attended.

“Passion for Fashion is, at its heart, a community event,” she said. “We all need to support our young women as they find their own paths toward adulthood. Their success is also our own.”

To learn more about the Cheyenne River Youth Project® and its programs, and for information about making donations and volunteering, call (605) 964-8200 or visit CRYP’s recently redesigned Web site at www.lakotayouth.org.

And, to stay up to date on the latest CRYP news and events, visit the youth project’s new Facebook group page. All group members will receive regular updates through Facebook.



The Cheyenne River Youth Project, founded in 1988, is a grassroots, not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing the youth of the Cheyenne River reservation with access to a vibrant and secure future through a wide variety of culturally sensitive and enduring programs, projects and facilities that ensure strong, self-sufficient families and communities.