

# A prom dress match made in heaven 5/3/19

By Lisa Reisman

BRANFORD — At 4:30 last Thursday afternoon, a junior at Guilford high school found the perfect prom dress at A's Unique Boutique in Guilford. The problem: it needed to be taken in. The junior prom was a little more than a week away.

"Go straight to Lucy's," owner Kara Engstrom told her, referring to Lucy Camarda, owner of Lucy Tailors in Branford. "Go now."

She and Camarda met years ago, when Engstrom regularly called on the Branford tailor's services to do alterations on the gowns of her daughter, Anna Cerino, a competitive ballroom dancer.

"Lucy's the one we could count on to get it just right," Engstrom said.

Fast forward to 2016 when Engstrom learned that Asiye's Boutique in Madison was up for sale. The Branford resident, who has an MBA and MPH, was the practice manager at Merryfield Animal Hospital, where her father was a veterinarian. On his death, the family sold the business.

Engstrom took a leap of faith. She bought the business. Last October, she opened A's Unique Boutique in the Thorwood Plaza on Boston Post Road. The shop also offers women's evening gowns and cocktail dresses, homecoming and graduation dresses, as well as shoes and accessories for those occasions.

This spring, upwards of 300 girls up and down the

Shoreline will be wearing prom dresses from A's Unique Boutique. At least half of them she sends to Lucy's.

"It's not exactly under one roof," she said, "but it's just a 10-minute drive." Besides, she added, "Lucy and I work well together. We both understand the urgency that surrounds these events, and we both get how each girl wants her dress to be perfect."

They both understand, too, that not every girl can afford a prom dress. Camarda recommended SARAH Cupboard Thrift Shop in Branford, to which she's donated over a hundred prom dresses; prom dresses there are selling for \$10 each, according to manager Joe Vidal.

Engstrom noted the "Say Yes to the Prom Dress" pop-up boutique, operated by Project Hope, on Audubon Street in New Haven offering free dresses to help offset the costs of prom.

Camarda, pinning the seams of the roughly 351st gown she's worked on this season in her Main Street shop, said she welcomed the dresses that traveled down Route 1 from Engstrom's boutique.

"I never leave this place anyway this time of year," she said, shrugging. "Bring it on."

► SARAH's Cupboard is on 155 Meadow St. in Branford. 203-481-4052.

► Say Yes to the Prom Dress Boutique is located on 83 Audubon St., New Haven, CT. Any junior, senior, or eighth grade student can get a dress for



Lisa Reisman /For Hearst Connecticut Media

**Lucy Camarda of Lucy Tailors in Branford and Kara Engstrom of A's Unique Boutique in the midst of prom season.**

**Lucy Tailors owner "Lucy (Camarda) and I work well together. We both understand the urgency that surrounds these events, and we both get how each girl wants her dress to be perfect."**

*Kara Engstrom, A's Unique Boutique owner*

free. Students are required to bring a report card or student ID to receive a free dress. Hours: Monday-

Friday, 3 — 8 p.m., Saturday, 9 a.m. — 5 p.m. through May 4. [projecthope@gmail.com](mailto:projecthope@gmail.com).