

TOWN OF HUNTINGTON

Makeover Helps Boost Women's Self-Esteem

Cactus Salon donates time and services for disadvantaged women at Family Service League

By Stephanie DeLuca
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It was all smiles and laughter at Cactus Salon on East Jericho Turnpike on Monday as the shop teamed up with Family Service League to provide economically disadvantaged women with a meal and a makeover.

"Cactus Salon is providing free makeovers, haircut and color for low-income women who need a self-esteem boost, as well as women that are in our vocational training program at Family Service League who are in pursuit of getting a job," said Lori Brennan, division director of Family Service League.

About 65 women from Family Service League's vocational programs were treated to a complementary makeover. They received a free haircut and coloring as well as makeup, and were given an assortment of pocketbooks, jewelry and accessories donated by Cactus Salon's staff and clientele from several branches.

Wraps, pasta, pizza and salads were donated by Spuntino in Dix Hills and Matteo's in Huntington. The women also left with goody bags filled with manicure kits, planners and more.

Denise Akerele, one of the women involved in the Family Service League's vocational programs, is appreciative for all that Cactus Salon has done for her.

"It lifts a woman's spirits up... even being homeless, it still gives me that boost

of confidence," said Akerele, who was glowing after receiving Coach and Louis Vuitton bags.

Cactus Salon first got involved with Family Service League during a toy drive they did together. Then things evolved into something bigger.

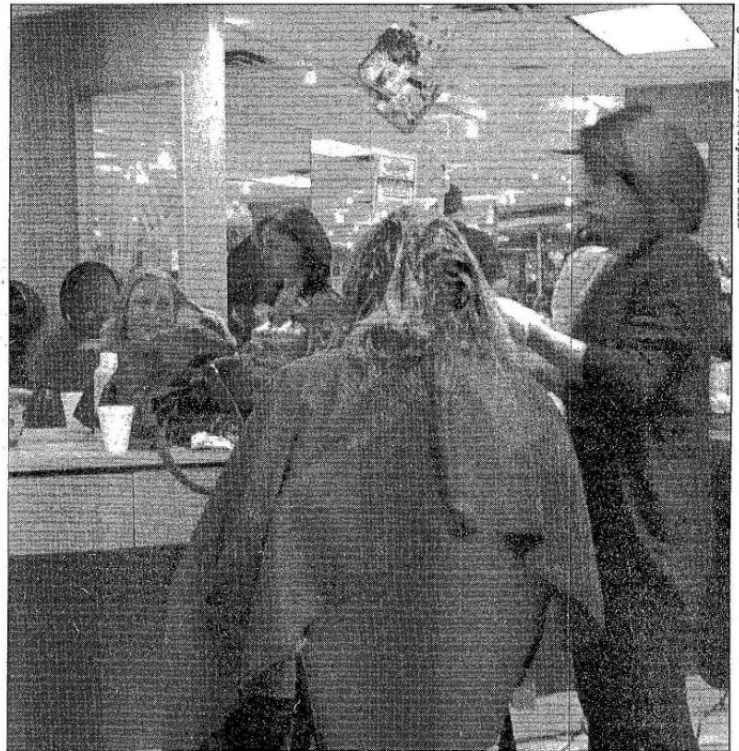
"There are so many women who go through [Family Service League's] system and really need these services," said Karen Vito, marketing director of Cactus Salon. "They can't afford these services but it's something they do need to compete in the job market today."

Vito said 80 Cactus staff members at the event donated their time, skills and expertise. She noted Joseph Secreti, owner of all Cactus Salons, instilled in his staff the act of giving back, and employees who work for Cactus come in with the understanding that it's a company that cares.

Hairdresser Brienne Prospero said this is something women need and she is more than happy to provide her services.

One of Prospero's clients was Joan Augusto. She was making her hair a few shades darker and cutting it for a more dramatic look.

"I'm excited to have this done and I'm grateful the girls are doing it for us," said Augusto, who learned a trade as a part of the Family Service League's flexible employment program. "Now that I'm job searching and not having money to afford to go to a place like this, it's nice the girls are doing it for us. It's a real treat."



Hairdresser Brienne Prospero gives her client Joan Augusto a dramatic new look.