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Midwood High seniors lookin', feelin' good at prom at Grand Hyatt

BY NANCIE L. KATZ

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Three Brooklyn teens trimming for their high school prom may not have met their weight goals, but they were slimmer and looked elegant in black, red and orange the night of the big event.

"I didn't make it to 20 pounds, but I'm up to 15," said Erika Hardaway, 18, draped in black, form-fitting satin for the Midwood High School prom last week.

"At first, I didn't want to wear anything that was form-fitting. But after I lost a little weight, I thought it might be nice not to be all covered up!"

Hardaway and her two pals, Melissa Ming, 17, and Andrea Carrington, 17, began in March to work out daily and stop food binges in a bid to get healthy and slim down for the June 4 prom.

It hasn't been easy, even though they've been working closely with Xamayla Rose, who opened a gym in memory of her slain brother in a bid to build girls' self-esteem and health, and lure them away from gangs.

Hardaway kept losing weight, but Ming and Carrington had a harder time. Yet all three - aglitter with hundreds of fellow seniors at Manhattan's Grand Hyatt Hotel - were thrilled how far they'd come and vowed to fight on.

"I fit in my dress. It's tight and it fits good, and that's all I worried about," declared Melissa, snug in a sequined red, floor-length gown. "I just wanted to look good and I feel like I look good!"

Carrington had the hardest time, but she was proud to declare that, in the last few weeks, she dropped four pounds.

"I feel like I'm getting to my goal," said the senior who loves to write, in a flowing orange gown, as friends took photos and slid out of limousines. "I'm just happy to be here and have fun with all my friends."

Back in April, all three said they began exercise and better nutrition programs after facing their families' history of ill health. Both Ming and Carrington lost their dads to obesity-related diseases, and Hardaway's father recently underwent quadruple-bypass heart surgery.

That's when they stumbled on Ladies Workout Express, at 1456 Flatbush Ave., a few blocks from their school. Rose opened it in memory of her brother, Christopher - killed over an iPod three years ago - to offer teens low-cost or free memberships to fight obesity, teach nutrition and build girls' health and confidence.

The prom girls knew nothing about Christopher, but they appreciated Rose's advice on clothes to wear, healthy eating and special trainers to get fit.

The June gala is just the beginning, they declared.

"It's not just the prom thing," said Ming. "It's a whole lifestyle change, especially going to college. I do not want to go through the 'Freshman 15' when you either lose or gain 15 pounds just when you start."

Their plans - enroll at the college gym as soon as they arrive.

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