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THE NORTHBROOK TOWER

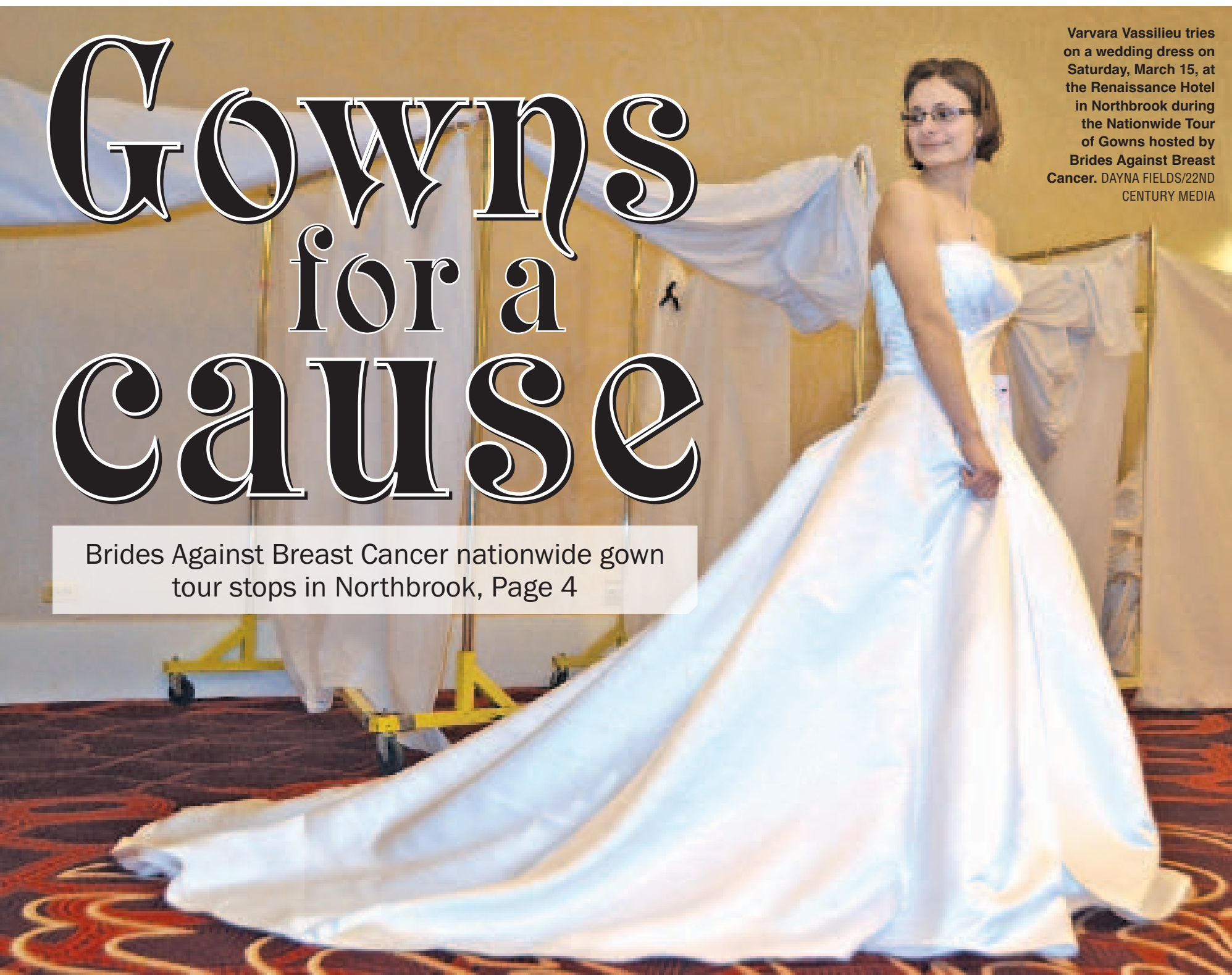
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Gowns for a cause

Brides Against Breast Cancer nationwide gown tour stops in Northbrook, Page 4

Varvara Vassilieu tries on a wedding dress on Saturday, March 15, at the Renaissance Hotel in Northbrook during the Nationwide Tour of Gowns hosted by Brides Against Breast Cancer. DAYNA FIELDS/22ND CENTURY MEDIA



News COVER STORY

Chicagoland brides storm NB for dresses

Nationwide Tour of Gowns benefits services for people with breast cancer

DANIELLE PERLIN, Staff Writer

Chicago resident Amy Wolff has a lot of family members who have been affected by breast cancer.

Wolff is getting married on March 28, 2015, and she has been looking for ways to purchase a wedding gown that could benefit a cause.

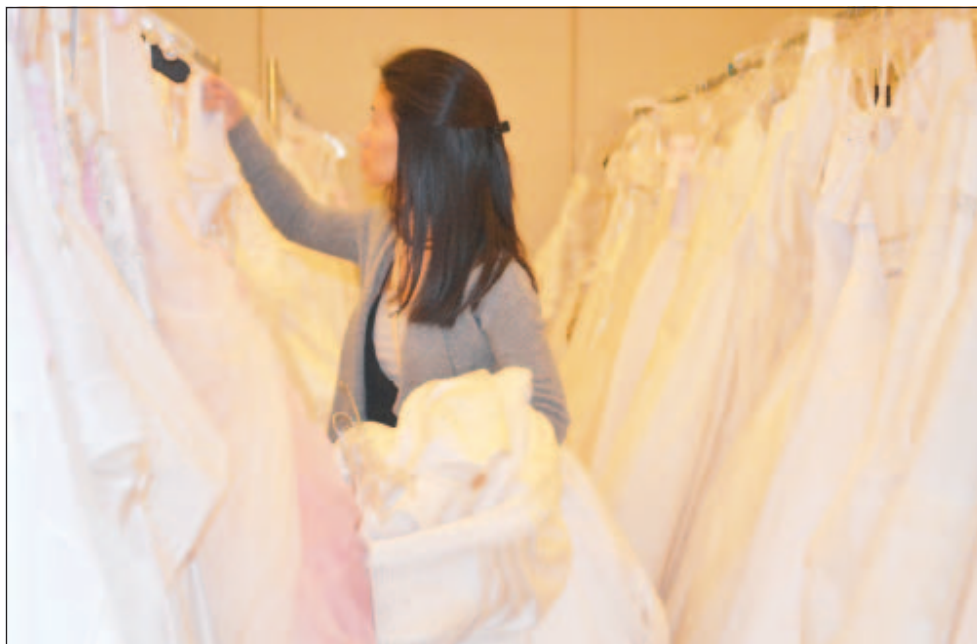
"When I found out that [Brides Against Breast Cancer's 'Nationwide Tour of Gowns'] actually went towards breast cancer programs for families who are affected, I really thought that it was a great charity to donate to," said Wolff, who purchased a David's Bridal gown for \$200 on Saturday, March 15, when the Nationwide Tour of Gowns visited the Renaissance Chicago North Shore Hotel in Northbrook.

Indeed, that money will go straight to programs and services for those affected by breast cancer.

More than 200 brides from around Chicagoland attended the charity expo, which boasted a display of 500 donated wedding dresses throughout the weekend.

On Saturday, many brides paid extra to be part of the VIP "Unveiling of the Gowns" reception. Brides could try on dresses with help from 150 volunteers, choose from various accessories and visit with 17 wedding vendors.

"We are trying to hit as many cities as we can; this year, we're on pace to be in about 120 cities," said Mya Widmyer, show manager.



Jennifer Chan sifts through the hundreds of dresses that were for sale at the Nationwide Tour of Gowns, hosted by Brides Against Breast Cancer, at the Renaissance Hotel in Northbrook on Saturday, March 15. PHOTOS BY DAYNA FIELDS/22ND CENTURY MEDIA

"We definitely wanted to get the bigger cities: Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, L.A. ... The Renaissance here was very accommodating [and] amazing to work with, so we chose Northbrook."

Widmyer said about 80 percent of the proceeds from the event fund free programs for cancer patients, their families and caregivers, which includes children's programs, support groups and nutrition classes. The other 20 percent goes toward operational costs, she said.

Brides Against Breast Cancer will raise more than \$2 million this year, according to Widmyer. The organization sells gowns donated by other brides and also by designers and bridal shops nationwide. The prices of gowns at the expo range from \$99 to \$799.

"I have been fortunate enough that I have not personally been affected by cancer, but some of my best



Volunteers Kalah Bediako (left) and Tiffany Morrow rush to help brides try on gowns at the Renaissance Hotel.

friends have, and I saw how tough it was for them to go through that experience," Widmyer said, noting that additional information, including how to donate, is available at www.BridesABC.org. "To know that there is

now support for people who are just on the sidelines of it really means a lot because it was just as hard for them as it is for the patient. Our goal is to make sure nobody has to fight alone."

Another bride who is get-



Sarah Sibley (right), a University of Chicago student, discusses a gown with her friend, Jessica Maciejewski.

ting married on May 23 this year, Joliet resident Monica Hundt, said her aunt is a breast cancer survivor, and her grandmother passed away from breast cancer.

"You couldn't have asked for better people back [in the dressing room] to help you out," Hundt said about the volunteers. "Giving back to the community is awesome. ... I got a beautiful dress. I got to spend time with good friends and affect other people with breast cancer ... and their families."

Brides at the event could also win a free one-night stay at the Renaissance with a free breakfast for two, donated by the hotel, via a raffle.

Widmyer said Brides Against Breast Cancer partners with The Knot to choose

the 17 vendors, which included Paper Cinemas, Novian Health and Passion Parties.

"The company is really about empowering women, and any event that supports the health and well-being of women, we want to be a part of," said Molly Lancelot, Passion Parties consultant. "Nobody is hurried, stressed or irritable [here]. It's very relaxed [and] fun. Everybody's happy to be here."

Wolff agreed with Lancelot and said the tour was a "really fun event to go to."

"There are so many people I know [who] spend frivolous amounts [of money] on stuff, and it's sad that it doesn't actually do any good. ... It's nice [this] goes to something that gives back to the community," Wolff said.