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FOX NEWS

'Orange Is the New Black' actress helps chronically ill teens enjoy prom at New York hospital



The excitement and fun of prom is a rite of passage for most high school students and for patients at The Children's Hospital at Montefiore, a chance to forget their illnesses for a night. On Saturday, the chronically ill patients ages 12 to 21 attended the Bronx, N.Y. hospital's sixth annual prom.

This year, "Orange is the New Black" actress Selenis Leyva, an Angel Ambassador with Gabrielle's Angel Foundation for Cancer Research, helped the 50 attendees as they prepared for the black-and-white themed ball. Leyva's brother, Arnol, was 3 years old when he was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma and recovered after receiving care at Montefiore.

For patient Essence White, 18, her diagnosis with acute myeloid leukemia in January meant losing the chance to go to planned activities, such as the senior trip and senior feast, for her fellow graduates at her high school, TAPCo (The Theatre Arts Production Company School), in the Bronx.

"I've worked very, very hard to be able to do these things, and the fact is that while everybody else is out there having fun, enjoying their year, I have to be in the hospital and fighting for my life," White told FoxNews.com. "I feel like the better reward is being able to live."

White, who wants to be an actress and a model, has undergone three rounds of chemotherapy and will soon have a bone marrow transplant. On Saturday, she wore a long-sleeve navy dress, had her makeup done, and brought a friend to celebrate the night.

"I found it very nice that everybody who was sick could forget about how they feel for a while, they can have fun, feel like normal people," she said.