UPTOWN NEWS

Model Na'imah Terry in Harlem promoting Plus Night Out - Fashion Week event. Photo by Nikki Gomez

Plus-size designers such as JustRaymona (above) will display their work at Hotel Pennsylvania fashion show Plus Night Out Friday night. Courtesy of JustRaymona

Big & beautiful

10 designers will show at plus-size fashion event

BY SIMONE WEICHSELBAUM
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

UPTOWN Latina Jovanna Reyes grew up admiring curvy bodies and wants the bone-skinny fashion world to do the same.

The 46-year-old, size-18 woman is behind Plus Night Out, a Friday bash featuring mannequins modeling haute – and hot – couture aimed to fit the average American.

Stick-thin waifs are not invited on this runway. Instead, Reyes will host 10 label makers dressing 45 women to prance around the ballroom of the Hotel Pennsylvania in midtown in formal gowns, casual wear and lingerie.

"It's like all of Fashion Week in just one night for plus-size," Reyes said. "I want these designers to have the same opportunity as mainstream designers."

Reyes' upbringing in Washington Heights, East Harlem and the Bronx influenced her ambitious drive to take on the snooty fashionista crowd and challenge it to embrace the full-figured set.

"Men like girls with meat on them," said Reyes.

Girth is a rare sight under the Fashion Week tents in Lincoln Center. Last week, plus-size designer Eden Miller and her colorful Cabiria line made history by becoming the first full-figured label to have a show at the 70-year-old event.

"If we were more embraced by the community, women would be more comfortable in their own skin," said Harlem resident Amirah Taylor, 20, founder of Please Feed The Models, a summer fashion show starring buxom beauties. Taylor said she is going to Plus Night Out in order to find sexy ladies who can take on the catwalk at her event.

Finding plus-size models is also Reyes' goal. She teamed up with Dale Noelle, head of True Model Management, who will reward the winner of Plus Night Out Model Search with a modeling contract which includes posing for the Ashley Stewart clothing store chain.

"The focus needs to be on health and not size," Noelle said. "I want women and men to be true to themselves."

And designer JustRaymona agrees.

"Plus-size women don't need a girdle to look better," said JustRaymona, crediting her years as an East Harlem resident for inspiring her en.V line, which will show at Plus Night Out.

"There is an uptown feel to it." she said. "Very feminine, with a modern flair."

Plus Night Out at Hotel Pennsylvania on 401 Seventh Ave. in Manhattan, Sept. 13, 7 p.m.-9 p.m. Visit www.plusnightout.com for info.

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Pols urge FEMA help for co-ops

BY CLARE TRAPASSO
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

CO-OP and condo owners should qualify for the same federal disaster grants that other homeowners receive, a Queens lawmaker is demanding this week.

City Councilman Peter Vallone Jr. will introduce a measure Thursday to urge FEMA not to treat such residences as businesses instead of normal houses.

Co-op and condo associations are considered businesses because the complexes, and their common areas, are owned by a group of people. As a result, owners of houses can get disaster grants, but co-op and condo owners only qualify for no-interest loans through the Small Business Administration.

"That's ridiculous," said Vallone (D-Astoria). "They're not corporations, they're peoples' homes."

FEMA officials said co-op and condo owners can get federal help for damage to their units, but not for their buildings or commons spaces because of the shared ownership.

Victims of Superstorm Sandy were particularly incensed.

"Here we are almost a year later, and we still don't have the...loan," said Daniel Alvarez, who sits on the board of the Beach House, a 43-unit condo in Rockaway Beach.

The building suffered more than $1 million in damage when a chunk of the boardwalk and cars smashed into the lobby.

But the board can't secure the loan until it receives permits for the repairs, he said. And it can't pay for permits without loan or grant money.

The condo raised maintenance fees 15% – on top of an extra $150 tacked on to residents' monthly bill, he said. But condo owners are still struggling to pay for much-need repairs.

"We need help," Alvarez said.

And it isn't just the Rockaways in need.

Glen Oaks Village, one of the largest co-op complexes in Queens, sustained about $350,000 in damage, primarily to the roof, from the storm. The 3,000-unit complex funded repairs with its reserves, said Glen Oaks President Bob Friedrich.

Many of the city's almost one million unit owners also saw their monthly fees jump to shoulder the costs.

"Families that live in co-ops and condos are no different than families that live in single-family homes," said Friedrich.

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