



Staff photos by Diana McFarland

Quinceanera Lissett Negron, right, waits as her sister, Isabel, left, and mother, Angie, approach to present her with a crown, one of the traditional parts of this Hispanic coming-of-age ceremony.

Upon turning fifteen

By Diana McFarland
Managing editor

Not every girl practices for her 15th birthday.

For Smithfield High School sophomore Lissett Negron, the practices took a few months and involved a dedicated group of friends — her damas and chamberlanes who made up her “court.”

Their goal was to nail the waltz, “Tiempos de vals,” for her big day.

Every culture has its own way of signaling that a child is beginning the transition to adulthood.

For a Hispanic girl, her 15th birthday can be marked with an

• See **QUINCE**, p. 11



Jorge Negron replaces his daughter's tennis shoes with her first pair of high heels, another Quinceanera tradition. He is assisted by his son, and Lissett's brother, Angel.



Quinceanera court members, from left, Madison Perdue, Paityn Barefoot, Jake Fales, and friend, Hannah Smith, ham it up for a candid photo after dinner.



The chamberlanes, from left, Caleb Tucker, Wyatt Langston, Jake Fales, Manuel De La Torre and chamberlane de honor Benjamin Ruuamau, figure out how to put on bow ties and adjust suspenders during a practice session.



The Quinceanera dances with younger family and friends after the waltz.



The Quinceanera court during a dress rehearsal Friday. Counterclockwise: Eliza De La Torre and Wyatt Langston, Holly Greer and Caleb Tucker and Benjamin Ruuamau and Lissett Negron.

Quince

• Continued from p. 9

elaborate ceremony called a Quinceanera, or Fiesta de Quine Anons.

Lissett's dance practices culminated Saturday night as the Negrón family hosted their daughter's Quinceanera for family and friends at The Smithfield Center.

Negrón wore a flowing floor length ball gown and her four damas — Eliza De La Torre, Paityn Barefoot, Madison Perdue and Holly Greer, wore shorter dusty pink party dresses and wrist corsages.

Negrón's chambelanes, Wyatt Langston, Jake Fales, Manuel De La Torre, Caleb Tucker and chambelane de honor, Benjamin Ruuamau, navigated the intricacies of bow ties, suspenders and stiff white shirts.

The group performed the waltz, a choreographed dance, after a blessing and a series of traditions bestowed on Lissett as she sat alone in the middle of the room — the center of attention.

The evening included a group of padrinos — family and friends who served as sponsors.

Quinceanera tradition calls for various family members to bring the birthday girl a ring, a necklace and her last doll — signaling that she is leaving childhood behind. The doll was handed off to her damas, Eliza.

Angie, Negrón's mother, and her sister, Isabel, brought her a crown and placed it on her head.

Negrón's father, Jorge, performed the shoe ceremony. Negrón's tennis shoes were removed and replaced with her first pair of high heels — to show she is stepping into the world as an adult woman. That was followed by a father-daughter dance.

After the waltz with her damas and chambelanes, Negrón's younger cousins danced around her.

The evening also included photos, a taco bar and a tiered cake.

As Jorge was thanking everyone for attending and participating in his daughter's Quinceanera, he looked her way and said, "You are the light of our lives ... You're always going to be our little girl."