The point, Rachel Doyle said, was to make them smile. And to prove that age does not define beauty.

Rachel, of Commack, is a pert, bubbly, sweet 16. She need not worry about wrinkles. At least not her own. What Doyle does worry about is elderly women living in nursing homes. She wants them to feel good about themselves. And she figures a little extra pampering and a makeover might provide the perfect lift.

Which is why Ms. Doyle recently brought her newly founded Glamour Gals, a nonprofit foundation, to the Gurwin Jewish Geriatric Center in Commack. While she applied foundation and blush to 90-year-old Lena Cushman, Rachel's friend Gabrielle Lanzetta, 16, dolled up Helen Oestreich, 85, and Vanessa Russell, 15, gave Sylvia Rosinger, 84, a facial.

The teenagers cleansed, exfoliated, freshened, moisturized, blushed and painted and gave the women manicures, cooing over their charges like little girls playing with dolls.

"It's a little superficial to say that makeup makes you beautiful," said Rachel, a junior at Commack High School, gently wiping lotion onto Ms. Cushman's face with a cotton puff, "but when you are doted on like this, when you are paid attention to, you feel special."

The idea for Glamour Gals, Rachel said, grew out of her experience with her own grandmother who was in her mid-90's when she died last year. On trips to visit her at a nursing home in Nevada, Rachel took her grandmother to a local mall for makeovers, then posed for photographs together as keepsakes from her visits.

The makeovers were expensive, Rachel recalled, and she couldn't visit as often as she would have liked. But the dab of glamour brought cheer, and the teenager decided she wanted to share the experience with other nursing home residents. She hopes to make Glamour Gals a monthly activity at nursing homes.
Ms. Rosinger, whose blond hair gets coiffed at the center's hair salon each week, said she hadn’t had a makeover in more than half a century. Neither Ms. Cushman nor Ms. Oestreich had ever had one.

"Maybe it can make me look better than I make me look," said Ms. Rosinger, peering into the makeup mirror on the table in front of her. "I have established a reputation. I wear makeup every day. If you look good you feel good."

Living in a nursing home was no reason to stop caring about appearance, agreed Toni Fischler, a Mary Kay sales director from Smithtown whom Rachel enlisted to help with supplies and makeup guidance.

"I think no matter how old you are, you want to look beautiful when you are a woman." Ms. Fischler said. "We are going to make them even more beautiful than they are today. They are going to need roller skates to run from the guys when we get through."

"What guys?" quipped Ms. Rosinger.

Did the makeover make them feel any younger?

"No," said Ms. Oestreich, wondering if it was even possible to be "a cutie" at her age. "It was just fun."

Afterward, the women posed with their makeup artists for Polaroids.

Ms. Cushman wasn’t sure she recognized herself. Ms. Oestreich couldn’t stop smiling.

"Not too bad for an 85-year-old broad," Ms. Rosinger said, admiring her photograph.