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**Created by Christine, a parent at Bedford park Public School, Toronto after their second successful event – she wanted other schools to benefit from their learning**

## **FIRST THINGS FIRST**

- A. Your first step is to become or find one (or more) leaders who can create interest in and execute a successful event.
- B. LEADERS NEED TO AGREE ON SOME KEY ISSUES:
1. Plan to obtain necessary approval from the school.
  2. Determine how to recruit participants (generally students but could be others – parents, teachers, custodians).
  3. Decide whether this is a pony-tail donation or headshaving or both – what do the leaders/school community want to do? Can this be part of a larger fund-raising initiative?
  4. Determine who will contact Childhood Cancer Canada.
  5. Childhood Cancer Canada has a web-site that can make this happen and issue tax receipts. Visit [www.childhoodcancer.ca](http://www.childhoodcancer.ca) to register your Small Hands event.
  6. Continental Hair in Toronto makes wigs for children and will be happy to receive the ponytails.
  7. Determine how to increase awareness of the campaign/event to increase the number of participants and generate donations.
  8. Determine how the Event will be conducted at the school.
  9. Final 'thank yous' and accounting and handover to next leaders (if applicable).

## **CHECKLIST AND COMMENTS**

Here is a checklist and some comments to assist the Leaders:

### **1. GAIN NECESSARY APPROVALS**

The heart of a school-based campaign is that the hair donations are made at a large meeting/assembly at the school. This may require a commitment from the principal as well as a parent council or equivalent.

It is best to seek clear approvals and commitments early to allow everyone to plan to make the event most successful..

If you address a group of parents or teachers to seek the approval of the event, this is really one of your key opportunities to market the event as exciting and worthy of support. Keep in mind that most groups are bombarded with charitable requests, so your challenge is to make this one stand out – perhaps by focussing on the event as a chance for children to contribute directly to helping others by donating their hair and money.

## 2. RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS

The key here is to start by interesting a core or starting group of children and their families in participating. If you can start with three or seven children, you have a good chance of them spreading the word. Your goal is to have participation go viral within a school and a school community.

Do use every opportunity before the event to increase awareness of the event/campaign. Every school will have its way of doing things, but using newsletters, posters, meetings, school events, announcements, and outreach through teachers are all useful tools.

Do not underestimate the power of asking parents directly if their kids might be interested. For many people, participating in an event or campaign is just something they have never considered.

Two areas of focus for increasing awareness: the good that kids can do by donating hair, and the good work done by Childhood Cancer Canada.

**There can be different types of participants:**

- Those who can donate hair sufficient to contribute to a wig and raise money for doing so;
- Those who shave their heads or who cut their hair very short as a symbol of sacrifice and who raise money for doing so.

More girls than boys donate hair for wigs because their hair is often long enough to meet the standard for donations (10" in length and not chemically processed – which is the best kind of hair to make a wig).

You do need a way to track participants because you need to plan the hair-cutting event and because you will likely need to send home waiver forms to allow kids to have their hair cut at the event. If kids are fundraising through the Small Hands website, this is a way to track the number and names of participants, but it is not unusual for new kids or families to present themselves at or just before the event.

## 3. FUNDRAISING

Encourage financial donations for research as this is what is helping to save more children's lives and why we now have an 82% survival rate for childhood cancer.

Childhood Cancer Canada has made a great website available for tracking participation and fundraising. It is possible to set a fairly modest fundraising goal on the website and then increase it if it appears that you will achieve the target before the day of the event.

It can be helpful to build excitement as the event approaches to share information with the school community on the total number of participants and the money raised to date.

Also consider creating small school events leading up to the big event (change jar in the school office, wear purple clothing (the colour of Childhood Cancer Canada) on a given day and donate a loonie, engage a key teacher or principal to donate or have their hair shaved, etc.)

#### 4. FUNDRAISING ADMINISTRATION

Websites, such as the one that the Canadian Cancer Foundation has, make this a lot easier than it used to be. Participants set up their own webpages, donors can donate with credit cards and receive instant tax receipts, the hosting organization can track all activities, and local leaders need not handle most donations.

Do keep in mind that some participants may collect cheques or cash that you have to process to the charity. Keep dated, accurate records of how much you receive from everyone, and do your best to deposit all such donations promptly. Be prepared for months after an event to account for any money that you have had to handle. If possible, have a second person verify any deposits received and passed on to a charity.

In some cases, people may donate funding at or right after an event. This is a good thing—it means that they have been inspired!

#### 5. MANAGING HAIR

Have elastics and Ziploc bags available to help the hairdressers keep the ponytails tidy. Make sure the hair is clean and dry and in a braid or ponytails with both ends in an elastic. You will also want to provide this information to the school community and all participants well before the event.

Although not a requirement, it is helpful to have experienced hair stylists at the event to cut off the pony tails and keep them in the right format for donations. It is also possible that hair stylists can “clean up” a hairstyle quickly at the event after the two pony tails have been cut off, but this is not essential.

You need to plan who will ship the hair from your event to Childhood Cancer Foundation.

#### 6. INCREASING AWARENESS

The most powerful tool to increase awareness is word of mouth – among adults and children. It is a good idea to have a few months (or more) between a decision to hold an event and the event itself.

Most people who participate do so after being influenced by people who are important to them—leaders, peers, classmates. Your task is to use meetings, posters, other events, school announcements, emails, newsletters, the local newspaper and even local merchants to increase awareness and make it easy for people to get involved.

Consider asking people who are not involved to help with the event—ask them well in advance in the hope that they will talk up the event and encourage others to become involved as participants or donors.

## 7. CONDUCTING THE EVENT

It is likely that your school will want to spend no more than one hour (or less) for the event, especially if it is at an assembly of most or all of the students. Here are some key issues to manage:

- a) what is the agenda for the event - what exactly will happen, who will do it, and how long will it take? – write it down, hand it out, and make sure everyone understands it. Lots of us do not plan what they will say to a group and then talk for extra time and forget key things to say – encourage everyone to plan ahead!
- b) who will be the head of ceremonies – make sure she/he agrees with and knows the agenda. If they are an engaging speaker, all the better! (note: in a school, you are on the principal's turf; consult the principal on agenda and head of ceremonies)
- c) Know who will manage the children and other participants - engage the teachers!
- d) Invite parents to the event – families of participants are likely your major fundraising donors – welcome them and try to get them chairs. Recognize them in someone's remarks.
- e) Your school may want to link the event to other things they are doing – for example, having the students who are donating or shaving their hair speak at the event. Ask up front! Engage the teachers!
- f) Know how you will explain the purpose of the event – will you have a speaker from Childhood Cancer Canada and/or something else to make everyone present feel the purpose of the event
- g) What is the format for cutting hair? You will need to make this visible to the whole crowd. Do two at a time if you have to – announce names of participants so that people can cheer! (Note: have a back-up plan if one of your stylists is unable to come at the last minute)
- h) What is the climax for the event? The youngest child? The most compelling story? The brightest coloured hair? A local celebrity? The Principal or a teacher? Put them last in the order.
- i) Ensure someone can take good photos for sharing with the broader community—no need to print them, as they can be emailed. Engage the local newspaper.
- j) Thank the people very visibly who contributed to the event. Hair stylists are skilled volunteers and should get top billing. Thank the participants publicly and use their names! Do not forget to thank the people behind the scenes who made the event happen, including teachers and admin staff.
- k) Print off Certificates from the Small Hands website and consider making a badge or other token for participating children to wear for the remainder of the day so that others will recognize their participation.
- l) Keep one leader free to manage the event without having to speak, or manage children, or cut hair or sweep, or hold up signs. Things will happen, and you want someone who knows everything that is happening and who is not shy about changing the plan or asking someone to shorten their planned speech. Just make sure the person can do all this with a smile!
- m) Remember, the event is the first marketing step for the event to follow in one or two years – make it memorable!
- n) Do not leave the school in a mess. Have a clear plan agreed with the school on how this will be managed.

## 8. WRAPPING UP

It might surprise you that there will be some work to do after the event. Here are some examples:

- a) School newsletter needs a short article and some photos – here is your opportunity to thank people publicly and build interest in the next time the event is run
- b) Cash or cheques arrive that need to be documented and donated
- c) People have questions or suggestions that they want addressed
- d) Hair has to be delivered
- e) Thank you letters to key participants, including school officials, teachers, hair stylists, local merchants, others who helped the event happen. Format letters so that they can be proudly displayed. Try to use an attractive letterhead and have it signed by someone important.
- f) Parents' Council wants or is willing to hear a report on the event. Again, this is your opportunity to increase interest in a future event. Conclude with your suggestion that the event be repeated next year. If they agree, you are one step closer to delivering on the next event!
- g) Write down the list of what you did to help you or someone else run the event the next time. Have a coffee with all the key leaders of the event and tell them how terrific they are (because they are)
- h) Consider how lucky you are to have met so many new people and helped some good happen for 10,000 cancer-fighting kids in Canada!