

Lasting legacy created with two years of hard work ? and a pair of scissors



By Brock Weir

It took two years of dedicated hair care, but just a few seconds of scissor snips paved the way for potentially years of smiles at Regency Acres Public School last month.

Dozens of students filled the school's gymnasium on Wednesday, June 25, to watch as their fellow students lined the stage to have their waist-length hair cut up to their shoulders all in the name of donating their hair to create wigs for cancer patients.

The ceremony is a long-standing tradition at Regency Acres, having been started by student Alice Sandiford when she was just starting out in the school. Now, having graduated last week to prepare for her high school career, she said she was pleased they were joined up on stage by some first-timers to carry on the tradition.

"I hope they continue to do it and realise all of this is going to grow back," said Alice. "It is just continuous."

One such first-timer was nine-year-old Bailey Chahley, who wanted to give it a try as soon as she heard about the hair drive starting out at Regency Acres.

"I just want to make a little kid really happy," said Bailey. "It feels really cool!"

This was the second haircut for Natalia Butylkian, who is heading to Aurora High School in September. Her hair grows particularly quickly, she said, but many people are not so lucky.

"After I got it done the first time, I felt really good that I was helping someone I probably would never know, that someone is going to be happy to have my hair," said Natalia. "To donate only eight inches of your hair shows support to them and shows that you care, and you can make it through and that you support them."

Also on hand to lend her support to the students was Erin Davis of CHFI. Heavily involved in causes related to cancer, including emceeding Relay for Life Aurora last month, Ms. Davis said it was important to cheer students on whenever they take on projects like this.

"Kids learn by example and somehow, somewhere these children were taught that giving was more important than anything and if you can come out and support them in doing this, they might do it again, other children might see it and be inspired to remember there are so many things more important than ourselves."

?It's the old saying that when you are given so much, much is expected of you. York Region has always felt like home to me. You can't say no [to supporting something] when people have such good causes as this.?

Alice came into her final haircut at Regency Acres less than 48 hours after her class's graduation ceremony, where Principal Cathy Martino-Porretta awarded Alice with the Principal's Award for her efforts.

?She has contributed so much to our school and has shown kids here that it is important to make a difference not only within our walls, but outside our walls too,? said Martino-Porretta. ?I hope [this event] will have momentum and I certainly want it to continue. It is part of what we do here, build really good character. We want to continue building these traits in our students to continue focusing on academics as well as the health and well-being of students, giving back, and teaching kids what it means to give back.?