

Birthday wish makes the cut

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At an age when most girls wish for toys and dolls, Patricia Vrysellas has a very unusual birthday wish: to make life better for others.

Patricia, who lives in the Bathurst Street and St. Clair Avenue area, celebrated her seventh birthday by lopping off two feet of hair. The long locks – and over \$5,000 in donations and pledges – went to help kids with cancer.

The youngster had grown her hair all her life, enjoying only the odd trim. When her brother Spiro saw a news feature on the Small Hands Childhood Cancer Foundation (www.smallhands.ca), however, she quickly saw an opportunity to make a difference.

Her two feet of hair will go toward creating a wig for a child who has lost his or her hair due to cancer treatments, and she collected \$5,508.50 from friends and family members to donate to the foundation.

"My brother saw it on TV and it was (taking place) at his school, so he said 'why doesn't Patricia do that?'" she said. "People who don't have hair need hair. It's nice that I could help people."

As word spread about Patricia's

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generosity, her birthday party snowballed into a larger community event at Hillcrest Park. Over the course of a week, local eateries such as Mr. Greek, Mr. Sub and Domino's Pizza donated food, Crayola Canada donated prize packs and a face painter offered to entertain the kids.

COUNTLESS OTHERS

Meanwhile, money was pouring in from both Patricia and Spiro's classmates and countless others who were touched by the fact Patricia asked people make a donation to the Childhood Cancer Foundation instead of buying her a birthday present.

Her selfless act was appreciated even by those who did not know her well.

"I told my class what Patricia was doing and everyone was

amazed," Spiro said. "When I first told (Patricia) about it, she thought I was joking, but then she thought it was a good idea."

The idea of helping others was hardly new to the Vrysellas children. Their mother, Kathy, said Patricia and Spiro have always been generous types.

"In the summer, Spiro would always put out a lemonade stand and it wasn't long before he started thinking maybe the money he made should go toward something," she said.

Of course, Patricia's sacrifice was not necessarily easy. Though she was happy to be able to help, she admits to feeling some trepidation.

"I really wanted to do it but I was sad my hair was leaving," she said.

Having lost two feet of hair, however, she certainly does not regret her decision.

Two of her friends even emulated her, lopping off their own long hair to help children who have lost their hair.

Patricia has even contemplated lopping off her hair again for charity in the future – once she has enough to donate once again.

"It feels good that I gave two feet of my hair to charity," she said.



DONATION: Patricia Vrysellas celebrated her seventh birthday by lopping off two feet of hair. The long locks and over \$5,000 in donations went to help kids with cancer.