

SUNDAY NEWS

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LIVING★★

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The kindest cut

Seventh-grader donates her hair for others in need.

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At left, Erin Hassel displays her pre-cut hair. Above, her shorn ponytail is ready for shipping to the Locks of Love organization.

"What are you doing for spring break?" might be a question many students are asking each other these days. Dreaming of vacations or just relaxing.

Erin Hassel, a seventh-grade student at Lancaster Country Day School, decided to spend Friday, the first day of her spring break, helping another child.

She donated 13 inches of her strawberry-blond hair to Locks of Love, a nonprofit organization that provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children suffering from hair loss.

According to the Web site, many of the children helped by Locks of Love have lost their hair because of alopecia areata, which has no known cause or cure. The donated hair prostheses help children to "restore their self-esteem and their

confidence, enabling them to face the world and their peers."

"For all of the people who do things for me, like people who sweep the streets and provide services that we never see, I want to be a part of doing something for others," Erin explained.

"This past summer, my girlfriend told me that she was letting her hair grow long to donate it, and she thought I might want to do it, too."

Once she and her mother, Jennifer Hassel, reviewed the donor guidelines listed on the Locks of Love Web site at www.locksoflove.org, Erin decided to participate.

On its Web site, Locks of Love noted that "the majority of all hair donated comes from children who wish to help other children."

Giving to others is nothing new for this 13-year-old, who organized bake sales at her school over the past two years to raise money for World Vision International. Erin also has taken her pet rabbit, Patches, to nursing homes to visit with residents.

The donor guidelines for Locks of Love list several requirements, including the hair must be a minimum of 10 inches long and bundled in a braid or ponytail. It must be clean, dry and placed in a plastic bag, then mailed in a padded envelope to the Lake Worth Fla., headquarters.

Locks of Love seeks hair from men and women, young and old, from all colors and races. It may be colored or permed but not bleached or chemically damaged. Hair cut years ago is also acceptable if it has been stored in a ponytail.

A leap of faith

Erin was accompanied by her mother and her 11-year-old sister, Emily, Friday morning at Salon 444, a hair and nail salon at 444 N. Lime St. owned by Pamela Miller. Hair stylist Bridget Reddington measured and prepared Erin's hair for cutting by tying it in a ponytail.

"My little girl is growing up," a tearful Jennifer said as Bridget cut the freshly washed hair. "I feel like I'm saying goodbye to her childhood."

Erin said she felt nervous when the scissors started cutting. She hardly remembered having her hair short, "maybe since kindergarten," she said. Her only instructions to her long-time hair stylist were to cut her hair any style, "but not in layers. Especially not in the front."

"It's a wonderful gift you just gave somebody," Bridget said to Erin as she held the ponytail up for her to see.



Erin Hassel, left, waits as Bridget Reddington snips off her long hair Friday at Salon 444.