

Free Wigs for Children With Hair Loss



A New York City celebrity hairstylist and wig designer said his dream – to provide wigs for children with medical hair loss – is coming true.

Andrew DiSimone, who has been an American Cancer Society volunteer for the last three years, launched the nonprofit FreeWigsForKids.org six months ago. The ACS has had a free wig program for women, but DiSimone is determined to help boost the self-esteem of children.

DiSimone, owner of FaceSalon in Manhattan, says children who experience hair loss “don’t fully understand what’s going on.” Many children see a wig as another accessory, which helps them look and feel good, he says.

DiSimone adds that, as children get older, they become more conscious of their appearance, and are singled out as being different from other kids.

"The hair enables them to fit in without standing out and help them feel as normal as they can during treatment," says DiSimone.

Sophia, a 12-year-old with alopecia, used to wear a bandanna and stay at home because of her condition.

After receiving three wigs from DiSimone, Sophia now is trying out for the school play. "She's back out there and living a normal 12-year-old's life," he says.

Since 2008, DiSimone has designed 150 wigs for people with medical hair loss. Each wig is made of "individually hand-tied hair" in a factory in China, and costs between \$200 and \$1,000, depending on the type of hair used.

This week, DiSimone gave four local girls wigs at a pampering session at the ACS Hope Lodge in Manhattan -- sponsored by Disney On Ice. Six other girls with hair loss joined them for manicures, pedicures, facials and wig styling, while meeting Disney On Ice figure skater, Rapunzel.

Disney On Ice is campaigning for Free Wigs For Kids. For each "Disney On Ice: Dare To Dream" ticket sold using the code "HAIR," \$2 will go to ACS, which helps fund the wigs.

DiSimone hopes other corporations will help him and the ACS support the cause.

Hair loss is "a flag or a sign that I have cancer. When they look in the mirror, it reminds them that they're sick. But when they can look in mirror, they see themselves again just before they started their treatment, it makes them feel like themselves again -- it's not a constant reminder of what they're going through," he says.