

Hair for Hope back in virtual format, aims to raise \$1.5 million for children with cancer



Transport Minister Ong Ye Kung shaving the head of CCF beneficiary and cancer survivor Terry Goh Wei Jie, 12, at the Hair for Hope event on May 2, 2021. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO



Prisca Ang

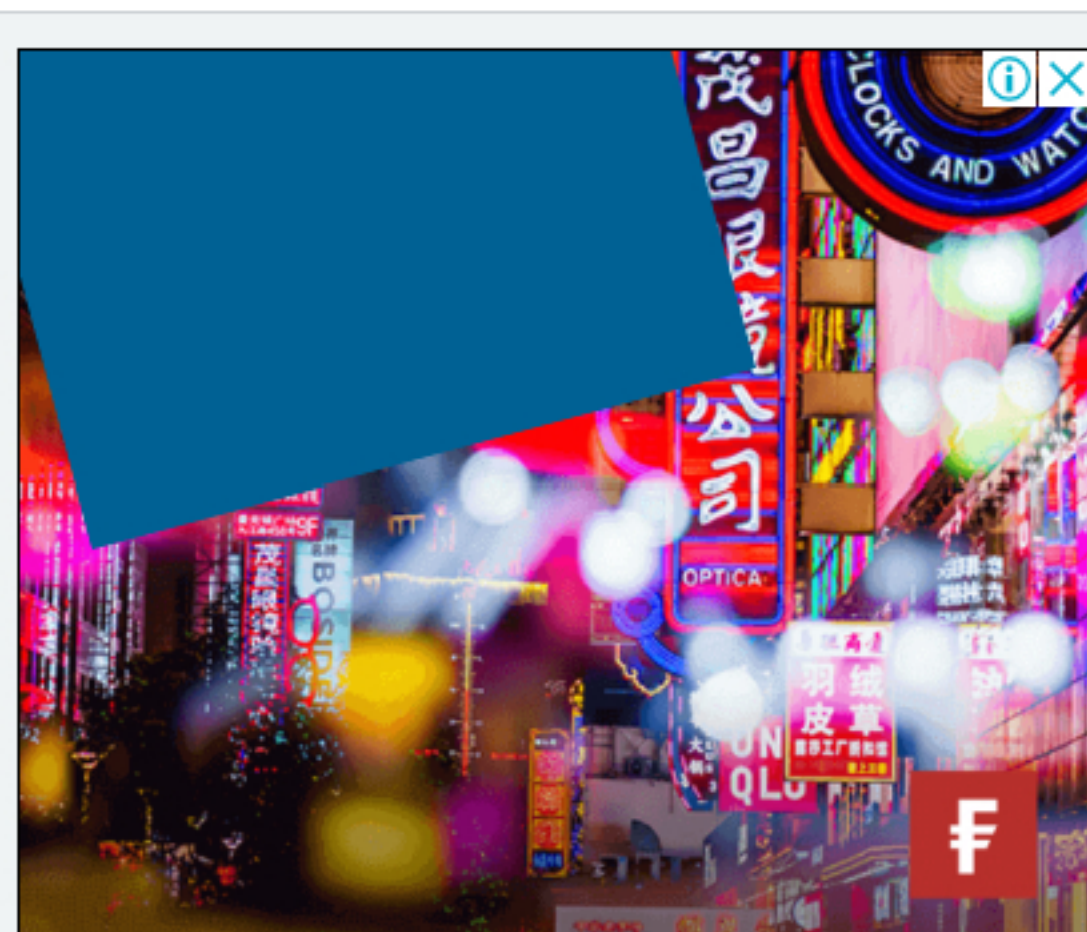
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SINGAPORE - Assistant microbiologist Thangavelu Latha has not kept her hair long since her son was diagnosed with Ewing sarcoma in 2019.

She and her husband have been shaving their heads to show 14-year-old Ron, who has completed treatment for the cancer in his lungs, that being bald is nothing to be ashamed of.

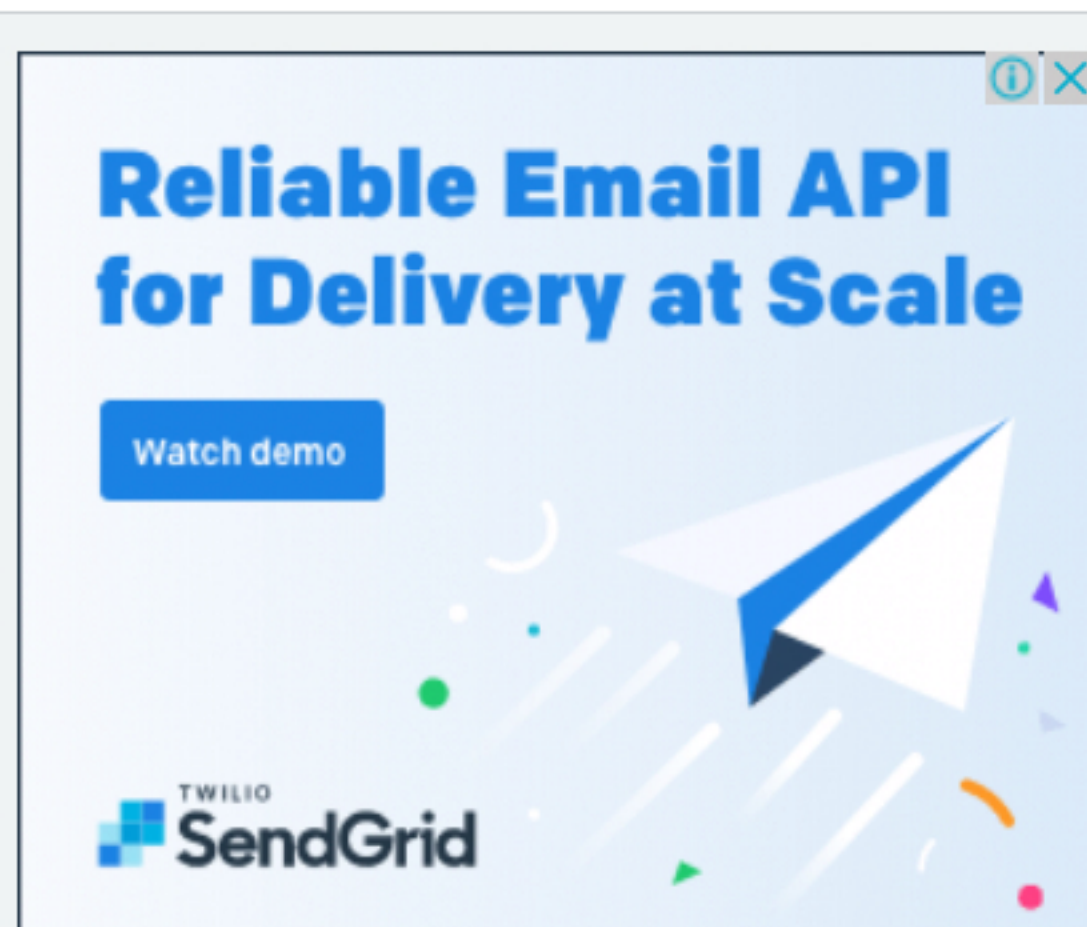
"When my son found out he had cancer, he wanted to keep his hair until the last strand. So we shaved first, and after that he agreed to do so," said Madam Latha, 42.



She is among several participants who helped to launch this year's Hair for Hope campaign on Sunday (May 2) by going bald.

The annual fund-raiser of the Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF) is taking place in a virtual format for the first time in its 18-year history. It took a break last year because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It aims to raise \$1.5 million this year to help children with cancer, and their families, by getting 1,500 people to shave their heads, raise awareness and bring in donations.



In a more normal year, the event can draw more than 5,000 participants and cover about 40 per cent of the CCF's total expenses. In 2019, it had raised a record \$4.78 million.

There will be no public head shaving events this year, so Hair for Hope participants across all categories should make their own arrangements to shave their heads.

They can also visit 11 Hair for Hope partner salons to do so, and enjoy a 20 per cent discount.

Donations to CCF will also take place online. The campaign runs until June 30, with some activities live-streamed on its social media channels.

Members of the public can go to [this website](#) to find out more.

More than 150 children and young adults are diagnosed with cancer each year in Singapore.

CCF chairman Ho Cheng Huat said at the Hair for Hope launch: "Pandemic or not, childhood cancer does not stop. Their struggles in fighting cancer do not stop too (in areas like) surgeries, medication, chemotherapy and hair loss.

"When children lose their hair, some get laughed at, some receive bullying remarks simply because they look different. Such actions affect their self-esteem and many avoid meeting other children in fear of rejection. Everyone who shaves shows support... You have a choice to be bald, but a child with cancer usually does not have that choice."



From left: Madam Thangavelu Latha, 42, CCF beneficiary and cancer survivor Terry Goh Wei Jie, and monastery unit manager Pua Luck Kheng, 49, having their heads shaved at Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery on May 2, 2021. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

Terry Goh, 12, parted with his hair at Sunday's event at the Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery. He was diagnosed with Burkitt lymphoma when he was seven and is now in remission.

"I want to help people who have cancer not to be afraid of being laughed at by others," said the Tao Nan School pupil.

Going bald with Terry at the event were Madam Latha and the monastery's unit manager Pua Luck Kheng.

CCF has supported beneficiaries like Terry and Ron, Madam Latha's son, through initiatives such as counselling, financial assistance and lessons at its Place for Academic Learning and Support to help them catch up with schoolwork.

Said Transport Minister Ong Ye Kung, who, as the guest of honour, shaved Terry's head: "I cannot imagine what the children are going through and how they feel. All I can do is that - big or small - to show our resilience and courage. We can all do our part - big or small - to show our support for them."

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ONG YE KUNG

CANCER

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

