



Sidney Zacharias, fourth-grader, laughs as she gets her hair shaved for the St. Baldrick's Foundation. Karina Williams/The Placer Herald

Students shave heads for cancer awareness

Money raised to go to St. Baldrick's Foundation

By: Toby Lewis, The Placer Herald
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It is hard enough to get a child to eat vegetables let alone volunteer to shave their head.

But for 30 students, both boys and girls, from Ruhkala Elementary School, the decision to shave off their locks to raise money and awareness for childhood cancer was easy.

The students took part in a special event Wednesday to raise money for the St. Baldrick's Foundation, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness and funds to help fight cancer in children.

The special event was the brainchild of Adam Salinger, a 12-year veteran of the Rocklin Unified School District and teacher at Ruhkala Elementary.

So far, the students have raised more than \$16,000 for the cause, and donations are still coming in.

"You can see the difference when we have kid power behind us," said principal Gary Yee.

Last year, Salinger raised \$2,000 for the foundation with only himself and Yee shaving their heads.

Salinger held a special elective class every Friday specifically designated to set up the St. Baldrick's event.

Consisting of 20 students third through sixth grades, the class recruited shavees, set up the logistics with barbers and obtained all the necessary materials through St. Baldrick's in New York.

"It feels really, really light and really weird," said fourth grader Sidney Zacharias, one of three girls who participated in the shaving.

Zacharias said what she looks forward to the most is not having to wash her hair.

The original goal of the group was to raise \$5,000, Salinger said.

After the group quickly matched that goal, they set the bar a little higher at \$7,500.

"They wanted to make sure that the goal was manageable and reasonable," Salinger said. "Once they hit that goal, they kept changing it. They just keep setting the bar higher and keep making it."

Salinger has been involved with the St. Baldrick's Foundation for about six years. He got involved through the Keaton Raphael Memorial, a non-profit organization set up by Robin Raphael, who lost her son to childhood cancer.

"Last year I transitioned to where I did kind of my own event where I was the only shavee," Salinger said. "It was a natural progression to get the kids involved."

St. Baldrick's Foundation began as a casual conversation between friends and has since become the world's biggest volunteer-driven fundraising program for childhood cancer. Events have taken place all over the world and throughout the United States, raising more than \$20 million and shaving more than 26,000 heads.

Funds are directed to childhood cancer research, to save lives and to improve the long-term quality of life for children who survive.