



PHOTOS BY DIANA BALDRICA/THE FRESNO BEE

Cathrine Howansky, left, styles Kaitlin Prado's hair at Salon Del Monaco in Fresno. Kaitlin is getting her hair cut for Locks of Love in honor of her friend, Charlene Wylie, in background, who has been diagnosed with breast cancer. Locks of Love provides hairpieces to poor children who've lost their hair because of medical reasons.

Inspiration always grows back

Girl donates hair to follow steps of friend with cancer.

Charlene Wylie spends much of her time inspiring people. Her good deeds include mentoring youths through Big Brothers/Big Sisters, taking in foreign exchange students, donating blood, inviting the homeless into her home, organizing a Christmas party for children at Craycroft Youth Center and serving as a hospice volunteer. She also taught First Communion kids at Sacred Heart Catholic Church for about 10 years.



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She's probably a bit embarrassed to have all of her kind acts listed. She speaks modestly about her charity and credits her parents with instilling in her a giving spirit.

Wylie, 53, also has donated her hair to Locks of Love, a nonprofit organization that provides hairpieces to poor children who've lost their own hair because of medical reasons.

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Nine-year-old Kaitlin Prado's brother, Kolton, 1 1/2, watches as Kaitlin's hair sits on the counter at Salon Del Monaco after being cut off Saturday.

She twice cut her hair for Locks of Love and was preparing to do it for a third time when she felt a lump in her right breast in March. She was at a Good Friday service in April when word came of her biopsy results. Her Christianity gave her strength. "I knew I had cancer," she says. "When I went to do the adoration of the cross, I left my cancer at the foot of the cross."

Three chemotherapy treatments have left her without hair, but she offers inspiration and spirituality with her positive outlook.

Wylie is scheduled for her fourth chemotherapy treatment a week

from today. She also will have a mastectomy. Still, she remains upbeat.

"I have really strong faith, and wherever God's will is, I can accept it," she says.

But this story of inspiration gets even better.

Wylie became friends with the family of 9-year-old Kaitlin Prado three years ago. Wylie has become a regular at the family's gatherings. She and Kaitlin also have teamed up on volunteer undertakings.

"It's like we're family," says Julie Prado, Kaitlin's mother. Kaitlin learned of her grand-

mother's lung cancer and Wylie's cancer within a couple weeks of each other. Kaitlin came up with the idea of donating her hair in the name of her grandmother and Wylie.

So the little girl, whose brown hair flowed nearly to her waistline and had been trimmed but never cut, had her hair chopped off Saturday for Locks of Love.

"Why cut my hair and throw it in the trash?" Kaitlin says. "Why not make a wig for someone who needs it?"

Kaitlin, a Burroughs Elementary third-grader who will attend Manchester GATE in August, has no second thoughts.

"Hair grows back and it's a great cause," she says.

Wylie met Kaitlin's father, Vic, when he was admiring her 1968 yellow Mustang in the parking lot of a Food Maxx, where he's employed. About six months later, he helped get the car running after it wouldn't start. The friendship between Wylie and the Prado family flourished.

Little did Wylie know that her stalled car would forge a lasting bond and lead to Kaitlin giving up her hair in Wylie's honor.

But it's all about fate and faith — both of which the Wylie firmly embraces.

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