



DONATING PURPOSEFULLY

One Woman's Decision to Shave Her Head

The week after The Bald and The Beautiful (TBAB) each April, the campus looks a little different. Sure, the sun is shining a little brighter with the arrival of spring, but all around campus there's a more noticeable change among some of the students: a little less hair. While the bald heads of men alone are striking, the shaved head of one of your female peers draws a little more attention. Senior Holly O'Hara chose to donate to TBAB last year in a significant way, shaving her head in order to raise money for pediatric

cancer research.

Now, less than a year later, Holly reflects on the impact of her donation. While Holly was still in High School, a friend who was attending Notre Dame reached out seeking

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donations, as she was about to shave her own head for the Bald and the Beautiful. At first the idea shocked Holly. *Why would young, female college students willingly shave their heads? Was there something in the Notre Dame water?*

With time, however, Holly began to notice the impact of this young woman's decision as donor after donor contributed to the cause. Holly attributes this generosity to the fact that "sometimes all it takes to wake people up, to move them to act, is to do something out of the ordinary— something seemingly crazy."

During her first years at Notre Dame, Holly actively participated in TBAB's efforts, finding herself drawn more and more to the cause. She knew that she wanted to donate, but she wanted it to be intention-

al, done after planning, focus, and fundraising. With respect to her decision, Holly shared, "I knew in my heart that it was something I could do without too much personal sacrifice. At that point, I knew I wanted to participate, and participate fully."

Leading up to the TBAB event last spring, Holly actively raised awareness on campus by telling her friends and family about her decision, both to hold herself accountable for her actions and to create more knowledge about the cause. She reflects, "The day I shaved my head makes my list of top 5 best days. I was blessed to have countless friends come and support me in my decision, embrace me before and after, and commit to donating on behalf of my lack of hair... It was one of the most emo-

"It was one of the most emotional things I have ever experienced."

tional things I have ever experienced, and though I couldn't do anything but smile like a fool, I knew I wanted to laugh and cry all at the same time. It's what I think of when I try to describe joy." Looking back to the time just after donating, she found great solidarity with others on campus who personally understood the effects

of cancer – those who do not choose whether they get to have hair or not.

When considering the impact TBAB has on the lives of cancer patients, Holly stresses that the impact is far more than financial. The organization provides a sense of support for those whose lives cancer has touched. "It connects us, binds us together, and allows true empathy to arise. Men and women gather to donate precious hair and large sums of money for no reason other than selfless love for those whom we are otherwise unable to comfort." She calls it a "healing power."

As this year's event approaches in just over a month, Holly offers some advice, "if you feel attracted or drawn to TBAB, then act. Get involved, donate, buy a hair extension, tell people about it, do whatever you can do right now to spread the mission." She advises that if you feel even the smallest desire or inclination to participate, pay attention. Talk to those close to you and gauge their reactions. Have them hold you accountable for your desire to participate, es-



pecially if you decide to donate your hair. Holly adds, "I know that every April, I will think of TBAB and the great work that is being done to bring both physical and emotional healing to so many lives. To all of the people who have donated or are considering donating, thank you for your generosity, and thank you to the TBAB team for all of their hard work in making this event even possible — your time and energy has made all the difference."

By Kelly Heiniger

This month's article incorporates the color orange in honor of kidney cancer awareness month

