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I whip my hair back and forth...for charity

By: Aimee Wester

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Jordan Hersey, sophomore communication studies major and worship leadership minor, walks into Wright lounge swinging his keys, and his hair swings along behind him. He wears a sweatband around his forehead which keeps his long locks at bay, but at times he swiftly tilts his head to keep his shoulder-length hair in place.

For the past year, Hersey has been growing out his hair in order to be donated as material for wigs. He says his hair's current length is approximately six inches, so in order to get to the minimum of 10 mandated by salons and organizations, he must keep growing his hair for another year or so.

"I actually love my hair right now," Hersey says. "I'm actually really excited for it to get longer. I've never had a moment where I've been like, 'Oh, I wish I could cut my hair,' just because it's different, and I like change."

He says that growing his hair out alongside friend Alec Boyd-Devine, political science major, encourages him to keep going, along with their original motivation to help people suffering from cancer.

"Cancer has just been a big thing that we've seen around us in our lives," Hersey says, "and so it kind of motivated us to [grow out our hair]. We can't do anything directly, but this is the one thing that we thought we could possibly do to help, in a way, is growing your hair out and donating it for people who have lost their hair... we're in it to win it, yo!"

Hersey shares this passion with his older sister, Joanna, who donated her own hair this past year.

"I think Jordan growing out his hair and the reason why he's doing it really reflects the kind of person that he is," Joanna Hersey says. "He's a very caring individual who just thinks about other people all the time. This is him. He's one of the most selfless people I know, honestly. He doesn't care what his hair looks like. He will grow out his hair for the sake of donating it to other people in need."

Hersey and Boyd-Devine are only two of many individuals from Huntington University who grow out their hair for donation. Based on an advertised SurveyMonkey survey, about 50 people from HU have donated their hair, more than half of which have donated more than once.

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Sarah Gruenewald, senior public relations and communications double major, is among this population, as she has donated her hair twice in the past.

She says that at the age of 10 she was first informed of the possibility of donation and thought, “Oh that’d be cool! I’m not using my hair, here you go!”

After her several donations, she says that before cutting her long hair for the last time before her high school graduation, the thought of possibly donating “gave [her] pause,” but she now prefers to keep her hair short.

The first time she donated, she made it to the 10 or 12 mark. She said it looked awful after they cut it.

“The second time I grew it out especially longer – it was under my boobs,” Gruenewald says. “And everyone before I cut my hair was like, ‘Oh my gosh, your hair is so long,’ even though I didn’t have my hair down to my butt like some girls do. I was just like, ‘I mean it’s long, but it’s not exceptionally long. There’s no reason to notice it.’ And then I got it cut in a funky way, and I just kept up with that and going shorter and shorter.”

Gruenewald says one of her reservations against donation was the possibility of being framed for a crime at the age of 14 because of her affinity for the crime series *CSI*.

“I was just like, ‘What if someone gets my hair as a wig, and they commit a crime, and they link it back to me?’ That would be so terrifying. And I would have to prove that that was somehow was my hair, but I wasn’t wearing it.”

Gruenewald also says that she lets the salon that cuts her hair donate it to the organization they are affiliated with, but that she does not wish to donate to Locks of Love, the household name of hair donation organizations.

Both she and Hersey have been warned against donating to Locks of Love due to reports of their selling of hairpieces as a not-for-profit organization. In fact, Hersey says that he doesn’t know where his hair will go, but he will make sure it does not go through Locks Of Love.

Locks of Love offered no comment for this story.

Renee Offerle of Great Clips in Huntington says their company is affiliated with the organization Wigs4Kids. They accept donations of 10 inches or longer which has not been dyed or permed, and the haircut is free. Offerle says that their donations come mostly from women.

“We usually only get about six or seven a month,” Offerle says. “Because it is a large amount of hair, it’s hard to get it to grow out that fast.”

Hersey says that he and Boyd-Devine take great pains to make sure their hair is as healthy as possible and that it meets donation requirements.

“I brush it every day,” Hersey says. “I can’t tell you how much I brush it because it’s more than like four at least. Like every time I come back to my room, and I go back out, I brush it a couple times before I leave.”

He says he and Boyd-Devine did extensive research, Googling and calling local cosmetologists in order to practice

good hair hygiene. He says they deep condition their hair once a week with coconut oil, have a very specific hair-washing routine including massaging their scalps with warm water then rinsing with cold, and are up for a trim soon.

“We want to give them the best, most luscious, healthy head of hair that they have ever seen,” Hersey says.

Hersey says that this stage in his life allows him to participate in hair donation and that it has made him appreciate longer hair, so he already plans on growing it out again in the future.

“What better time to do it than being in college where you don’t have to worry about being professional for a job... If you’re gonna grow it out, might as well donate it.”

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