

Students Take a Stand in the Fight against Cancer (Reprint from a story written by Scott Fishman of the Sun-Sentinel)



Donning a bald cap to raise cancer awareness hit close to home for Tyler Katz. The eighth-grader at University School in Davie participated in the campus' Be Bold, Be Bald initiative in honor of his grandmother, who died of the disease. Katz had the date of her death written on the outside of his cap.

"It's important for us to show our support," he said. "That's why every year I've bought a bald cap, and when I bought one, I donated a little bit extra to get the point across. My grandma was the biggest direct impact for me. Three of my family members have gotten cancer within the past two years. One of them is still going through it. One is now cancer-free. Then there is my grandma."

Katz is president of the school's Debbie's Dream club, an extension of the nonprofit Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer created by Davie resident Debbie Zelman. Members sold bald caps to classmates, who wore them throughout the day.

Sixth-grader Hannah Egozi has lost several relatives to cancer. "I wanted to help other people because now I know what it is like having somebody who has it," she said.

Mallory Schnell joined the club three years ago after her grandfather's death. "I wanted to help the cause and support cancer awareness," she said. "We have a couple of fundraisers in addition to this one. We do a jeans day, a goldfish cracker eating contest and other ways to make a difference."

Marty Koelner, sixth-grade science teacher and club sponsor, said they've raised thousands of dollars over the years between the sale of the bald caps and student fundraising. Koelner's husband is a two-time cancer survivor.

"We are looking for new ideas to get people involved," she said. "One thing about having Debbie's Dream on campus is although we have our group, all of our activities are planned to involve everybody. It's on a school-wide and community level."