

Stephanie—I explained about alopecia. They all watched as I had my head shaved.... I wasn't nervous ... I could feel the support and love from everyone...



Hello,

My name is Stephanie. I will be 16 in April.

My story starts:

I was 11 years old and in Year 5. My mother noticed that I had two places on my head without much hair, about the size of a 20 cent piece. My hair was long and thick so we had no trouble "covering". I don't remember how long it took to grow back, it really didn't worry me.

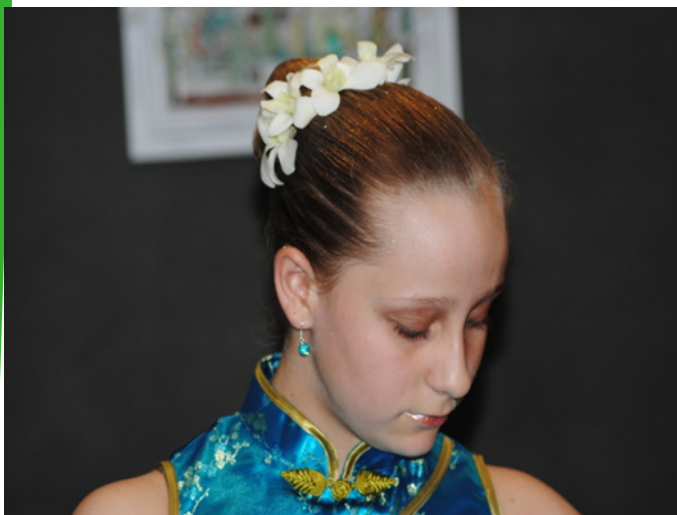
Then in Year 6 it happened again, this time the bald spots were larger and there were four of them....

We had just returned from a holiday in Thailand, the beautiful ladies over there braided my hair and put coloured beads on the ends. I thought it looked great! It was when we undid the braids that we noticed the spots... Mum was worried that maybe the tension of the braids on my scalp pulled the hair out. This time it was more difficult to "cover" but we did... Mum went to the Chemist to see if they had any ideas... There was a pamphlet on the counter, a young girl with Alopecia was recommending things that had helped her. We tried them to see if they would work for me ... At the end of this year I had my farewell, I was wearing a dress made for me in Thailand we "covered" with hair and flowers....



Mum said I looked beautiful (she has to say that) she says this is one of her favourite photos.....

After a while the hair did grow back.



Then came Year 7, I was 13. High School... I was so looking forward to it, really excited...

I think it was June/July that we noticed more than the usual amount of hair in my brush.... more than the usual amount of hair trying to go down the drain hole after I washed my hair....and caught between my fingers as I was washing it L:-(. Hair over my pillow in the mornings...

This time there were patches but I was losing hair from all over my head. We went to the GP when we realised this was going to be more than a few small patches. He told me that many people put this hair loss down to "stress" ... Well I wasn't stressed!! He showed us a book with the different types of Alopecia.

He accidently flipped the page and there was a photo

of a bald lady ... he very quickly turned back to the previous page saying "Don't worry about that photo, that doesn't happen very often."

Too late.... I thought **"OMG...!!! that could be me !! "**

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Stephanie—“Oh well !It won't change me or who I am.”

I was given a referral to a Dermatologist. Over the years he has done tests and given me different medications to try and get my hair to grow, and it did.... on my arms, back and tummy..... course, dark hair... but nothing on my head... last visit he threw his arms up in the air ... stopped trying.. Thank goodness... :-)

It only took about two months for almost all of my hair to fall out... I was wearing a hat to school as we were no longer able to “cover”... Mum had written to all the teachers individually asking them not to embarrass me by asking me to take my hat off. Of course there were those that made fun of me and even pulled my hat off, throwing it away. I didn't want to go to school. We went up and saw the headmaster and explained that we had decided to shave what was left of my hair as it was so depressing looking into the mirror. My hair was only long thin strands, I looked like a witch from a fairy story... it made me so unhappy... (When I looked at this photo, to put with this story, those feelings come rushing back... best decision ever to shave it off....).



When he heard this, and our plan to do some fundraising, (many of my friends and family were shaving with me, some with hair long enough for wigs) to make more people aware of Alopecia, his face lit up and he asked if I would shave at school. He then offered to join me and have his hair shaved.

Yes!!!! How wonderful... we asked the students/teachers etc if would they donate a gold coin, and they did.. The local television station and newspaper interviewed me, my headmaster and friends, they watched, with most of my family, as I spoke at the school assembly, which consisted of all the students and teachers, I explained about alopecia. They all watched as I had my head shaved.... I wasn't nervous ... I could feel the support and love from everyone...They clapped... Mum was crying, but she said not because she was sad but because she was so proud of me.... :-)

Chel sent me an email just before we left home saying “Welcome to your new found freedom” at the time I didn't understand, but as soon as I was “free” from this awful mess on my head I knew exactly what she meant ... it was as though a great weight had been lifted off me and my family.... Thank You Chel...

No more hiding for me...

My school is not a big school only Years 7-10 and they raised over \$4,000-00. I tell you this not to receive praise but to show that when people are aware they can be very generous. There will always be a special bond between me and my headmaster.

That was three years ago and I have experienced all types of alopecia. I decided to have my eyebrows tattooed because I look really sick without them and when I was drawing them on I would come home from school with only half an eyebrow because I had rubbed the other half off :-). Of course people are curious, most think I have cancer...but if they ask, or talk to me I am only too happy to tell them.

I wear wigs, hats or nothing depending on how I feel. I have realized that there are many worse things than not having hair don't get me wrong hair would be nice but defiantly not necessary for me to live my life as I plan.

I will not have any more treatments if my hair grows back, good ... but if it doesn't...

“Oh well !It won't change me or who I am.”

Now mum thinks THIS is her favourite photo..... for goodness sake !!!

..... Stephanie.....

