



Saints Shave Heads for Student-Led Fundraising and Awareness Campaign for Pediatric Cancer

Tara Lennon

October 4, 2024 11:45 AM

Austin Macalintal '26 fundraised and raised awareness for a personal cause, Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, with a head-shaving event on the Front Lawn.

The Front Lawn is many things for the St. Andrew's community—playground, classroom, event venue, and more. On Sept. 29, it took a new shape: that of a barber shop.

Organized by Austin Macalintal '26 as the culminating event of a fundraising and awareness campaign for pediatric cancer, Saints gathered to watch 13 of their own, including faculty and students of all forms, shave their heads in honor of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

"I just wanted to help raise money to give back, but it's also [about] the awareness aspect—just understanding the things some kids go through and being able to acknowledge that fact and then empathize," Macalintal says. "It was nice because a lot of the kids don't really have a choice, and [by shaving your head,] you're kind of going through the same thing [and] choosing to shave your head in support [of] them."

Macalintal introduced this initiative to the school community during the first School Meeting of the year on Sept. 5. He shared his personal journey going through a diagnosis with osteosarcoma.

"I was somewhat nervous [about] being very open to the whole community about this," he says. "Everyone was really supportive. I know a lot of people thought it was nice to be informed, or just... to know the story behind it and



understand it rather than being in ignorance and not knowing what truly happened.”

Diagnosed before the start of fourth grade, Macalintal spent the year going through treatment and surgery, with his treatment ending in April of that year.

“A big thing when going through it is just all the people there to support you,” he says. “You don’t really remember how tired you were ... [but] you really remember the people that were there for you and [how] they gave time to help you feel better and make the most of your time in the hospital or your time during treatment.”

Macalintal’s people: his family. He remembers the unending time and support they gave him, and how his family took care of each other through this difficult time.

His family also connected during this time to the **Tom Coughlin Jay Fund**, a foundation which helps families tackling childhood cancer through financial, emotional, and practical support. Macalintal particularly remembers the programs put on by the organization which lightened his mental load in and out of hospital.

Macalintal and his family have kept the organization and its mission close to their hearts in the years since, and his older siblings, Zach ’24, Madison ’22 and Katie ’20, first fundraised for it at St. Andrew’s before Macalintal began his own boarding experience. Now a V former, Macalintal spread awareness about and encouraged donations to the Tom Coughlin Jay Fund within the SAS community with his announcement at School Meeting and follow-up emails to the student and faculty body, a dress-down day in which students wore yellow in honor of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month—with the \$2 cost of dressing down benefiting the foundation—and the head-shaving event on the Front Lawn.



Dean of Student Affairs and Macalintal’s advisor **Gregory Guldin** says Macalintal’s initiative, and the subsequent community response, has been “St. Andrew’s at its best.” He was eager to show Macalintal his support by buzzing his hair, and hoped to get other Saints on board by doing so.

Throughout the entire month, Macalintal aimed to give back to the organization and community that gave so much to him and his family. But he says that “giving back” is about more than just raising funds, but about

showing up for others with your time.

“I didn’t really expect that many people to shave their heads,” says Macalintal. “It was nice to see all of the people that were willing to shave their heads, but also to see all the people that were willing to watch and support the whole thing [and] just be there. It showed me how much people care.”