

# Hair help for kids with cancer

## Zichron Menachem's 'Hair to Wig' program grows

• By RUTH EGLASH

Nine-year-old Tamar Bamberger used to have the kind of locks that almost every young girl dreams of – long, straight, light brown, bordering on blond.

That was until six months ago when the young Jerusalemite was diagnosed with cancer and underwent intensive chemotherapy.

The treatment will hopefully have been successful in eradicating the cancer but the side effects of the chemo meant Tamar no longer has her beautiful long hair.

Her mother, Na'ama, says that a custom-made wig designed to match Tamar's original hair has really gone a long way to help her daughter deal day-to-day with the illness.

"It [the wig] has made all the difference, it has allowed her to be sick but to continue on participating in life. She does not feel different to everyone else," says the older Bamberger, noting that one of the biggest emotional problems for young cancer patients is the loss of hair.



MARNE ROCHESTER (left) grew her hair long for two years so she could donate it to form a wig for nine-year-old cancer patient Tamar Bamberger. (Courtesy photo)

"Tamar started losing her hair about three weeks after the first treatment," she continued. "People tried to talk her out of getting a wig, they said it would be too big and uncomfortable for her but she really wanted one."

Finding the right kind of wig for young cancer patients can, however, be a real problem. Adult wigs do not fit properly and therefore each wig must be made to measure, making a realistic wig an expensive luxury.

That is where Zichron Menachem, The Israeli Association to Support Children with Cancer and their Families, comes in.

The Jerusalem-based organization, which is known for its adventure camps and other fun activities for children with cancer, also runs the 'Hair to Wig' program whereby people can donate their tresses in order to make a wig.

Leah Bar-Zev, public relations coordinator for the organization says that both men and women grow their hair especially to donate it to the project.

Many of the young men grow their hair during the pre-army preparatory program and donate it just before joining the Israel Defense Forces, she said.

"Donating hair is an amazing thing to do," says Marne Rochester, 39, who has been growing her hair for the past two years so that it could reach the requisite 25 cm to be turned into a wig.

Last Friday, she was finally ready to let it go and, after following Zichron Menachem's detailed instructions on the internet ([www.zichron.org](http://www.zichron.org)), Rochester called her hairdresser and went for the chop.

"My hair will grow back but theirs [the cancer patients] will take much longer," says Rochester, a single mother to five-month-old Leora, whose current economic situation meant that a monetary donation ahead of the Pesah holiday was out of the question.

"This is the shortest it's been in 35 years," says Rochester. "There were a few tears when I cut it. I love long hair, but it will grow back soon enough."

She added, "It was worth it, however, knowing that it will help ease the physical and psychological pain of a kid suffering from cancer. These children are going through chemo and they don't have any hair and this is one of the few things I am able to do to help."