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TODAY
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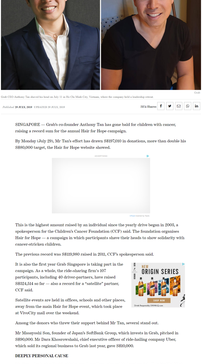
Grab CEO Anthony Tan gives bald for children with cancer; raises record $6M8

By MARGARETH SIM



ORIGIN SERIES
Grab Regional Head Quarters, Singapore

Published JULY 31, 2019 UPDATED JULY 31, 2019

SINGAPORE — Grab's co-founder Anthony Tan has gone bald for children with cancer, raising a record sum for the annual Shot for Hope campaign.

By Monday night (July 29), Mr Tan's effort has drawn $6M8 (US$4.4M) in donations, more than double his $3M5,000 target, the Shot for Hope website showed.

This is the highest amount raised by an individual since the yearly drive began in 2005, a spokesperson for the Children's Cancer Foundation said. The Foundation organises Shot for Hope — a campaign in which participants shave their heads to show solidarity with cancer-stricken children.

The previous record was $6M3M raised in 2011, CCF's spokesperson said.

It is also the first year Grab Singapore is taking part in the campaign. As a whole, the ride-sharing firm's 87 participants, including 40 driver-partners, have raised $6M5,M in the — also a record for a "satellite" partner, CCF said.

Satellite events are held in offices, schools and other places, away from the main Shot for Hope event, which takes place at VivoCity and over the weekend.

Among the donors who Grab company helped hit Mr Tan, several stand out.

Mr Moonpoint Soo, founder of Japan's SoftBank Group, which invests in Grab, pitched in $M5M. Mr Shin Kawasoe-Kaul, chief executive officer of ride-hailing company Uber, which sold its regional business to Grab last year, gave $M5M.

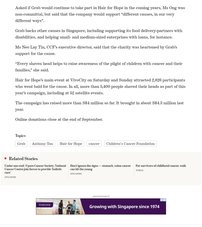
DEEPEN PERSONAL CAUSE

Mr Tan, who is Grab's chief executive officer, shared his head on Aug 27 in Ho Ch Minh City, Vietnam, where the company had held a leadership retreat.

While he declined to be interviewed when approached, Mr Tan said in a post on networking site LinkedIn that the cause was deeply personal.

"My mother-in-law was a cancer patient and my wife, Chloe, remembers her losing her hair affected her.

"I am a survivor-better of three and I can't imagine the grief that these children and their families go through when they receive the diagnosis and start cancer treatment. This is my small way of trying to support with them," he wrote in the post a fortnight ago.



Technology company Grab's participants at the event which the Shot for Hope campaign includes a bicycle ride from top left: Anthony Tan, co-founder and chief executive officer; Mr Ong Chin Sin, deputy principal, Mr Arnon Antonio, senior manager and Mr Chaiwen Lim, project manager, Photo: Grab

Grab's involvement was sparked by a conversation between Ms Ong Chin Yin, the head of people, and Mr Andrew Chen, head of transport for Singapore, early this year.

Ms Ong, 48, who oversees human resources and information technology at Grab, told TODAY that the movement was "very organic but very quick".

"Employees started to sign up... then you see employees donating so well — not seeking multiple donations — it different colleagues who signed up on "shavers," she said.

For Ms Ong, the cause is also close to her heart as she knows several women in their 40s who have fought, or are still fighting, cancer.

One died as recently as about two months ago. "You see the suffering through the years of battling cancer; you see the impact on her husband and her two young children," she said.

Ms Ong, who used to sport a bob, shaved her head in Grab's downtown offices in Marina One on June 27. She made the commitment partly to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with children who are "bedred and feeling ill times more self-conscious than somebody like us".

"The point of the movement is... to show to the world and to them that it is okay, and that there is nothing to be ashamed or fearful about," she said.

EVERY SHAVER HEAD COUNTS

Other Grab employees were moved to take part by their own brushes with ill health.

For Mr Arnon Antonio, a senior marketing executive at Grab Singapore, a health scare earlier this year involving his lower "was extremely terrifying — even to see as an adult".

"I can only imagine how difficult it is to be a child and to know that you have to battle cancer. In a way, this is my little gesture to support these kids, showing that I understand and that I solidarity their bravery and resilience," the 28-year-old told TODAY.

Mr Chaiwen Lim, a project manager with Grab, recalls his young childhood because of an illness and had to don a cap constantly to avoid curious stares from others. Her hair returned early in primary school.

"I want to stand in solidarity with the children," Mr Lim, 41, said.

Asked if Grab would continue to take part in Shot for Hope in the coming years, Ms Ong was non-committal, but said that the company would support "different causes, in our very different ways".

Grab backs other causes in Singapore, including supporting its food delivery partners with disabilities, and helping small- and medium-sized enterprises with loans, for instance.

Ms Sou Lai Ha, CCF's executive director, said that the charity was heartened by Grab's support for the cause.

"Every shaven head helps to raise awareness of the plight of children with cancer and their families," she said.

Shot for Hope's main event at VivoCity on Saturday and Sunday attracted 2,820 participants who went bald for the cause — 18% more than 2,400 people shaved their heads as part of this year's campaign, including 40 SZ satellite events.

The campaign has raised more than S$4 million so far. It brought in about S$4.0 million last year.

Online donations close at the end of September.

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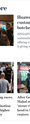

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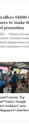

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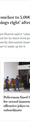

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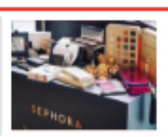

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