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With Her Soft Toy in Hand, 8-Year-Old Aifa Faces Cancer with Quiet Strength

Hair for Hope 2025 highlights the courage of children like Aifa and the power of community support

Singapore, 25 June 2025 – When Aifa steps into the treatment room, she brings along her soft toy, a playlist of her favourite songs, and a quiet courage far beyond her years.

Diagnosed in January with pineoblastoma, a rare and aggressive brain tumour, the bubbly, artistic Primary 2 student has since undergone multiple brain surgeries, chemotherapy, and 30 sessions of proton therapy. During the therapy, she lies perfectly still under a fitted mask, facing radiation alone. Yet she never complains. She simply asks, *“What’s next?”*

Aifa’s mother, Aisyah, recalls how it began during a family holiday late last year. Aifa started complaining of headaches. Then came double vision, vomiting, and troubling fatigue.

“We thought it was just a passing bug. But when the doctors reviewed her MRI and asked for a consult, my heart sank. Within days, we were told she had a malignant brain tumour. I remember feeling like my world stopped.”



(Aifa before her diagnosis)

A Little Girl's Brave Rituals

In the months that followed, Aifa faced every part of her treatment with determination. She named her favourite plushies and brought a different one for each proton beam session for support. She selected cheerful or calming songs to steady her breath during radiation.

At first, she was afraid of the mask that had to be moulded tightly to her face and secured. *"It was scary,"* Aisyah admits. *"We thought she would need general anaesthesia for every session."*

But with preparation from the team at Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF), along with support from doctors and nurses, Aifa found the courage to try.

She completed one session fully awake. *"The team gave her a standing ovation. She looked surprised, but she smiled. That gave her confidence. After that, she never looked back."*

Each session became a ritual: soft toy in hand, her favourite stickers on her mask, and her family cheering from the sidelines.



(Aifa undergoing treatment at KKH)

The Bond Between Two Sisters

During her treatment, Aifa was separated from her sister, Auni, for nearly two months due to ward restrictions.

"They cried over video calls. They wrote each other cards and folded origami birds. It broke our hearts."

Eventually, the family appealed for a visit and Auni was allowed into the hospital room.

"It was like the sun came back. That reunion meant the world to us."



(Aifa reunited with her sister, Auni, at the hospital)



Carrying Each Other Through

Throughout the journey, the family leaned on love, faith, and the support of CCF.

"There were nights I cried silently in the shower," Aisyah shares. "But I told myself if Aifa can go through this, we can too."

CCF has journeyed closely with them since the beginning, offering not only emotional support, but practical tools that made a real difference in how Aifa and her family coped.

From the beginning, CCF's social workers supported Aifa with emotional guidance and practical tools tailored to her age and needs. Using 3D models, play-based activities, and illustrated books, they helped her understand what was happening to her body in a non-threatening way.

"They spoke her language. They never talked down to her," Aisyah says. "That made all the difference. Aifa felt in control, not just scared."

CCF is the only social service agency in Singapore that offers dedicated Child Life Services at NUH and KKH, which helps children cope with the stress, fear and confusion that can come with cancer. When Aifa experienced anxiety before each session of her proton therapy, CCF introduced her to breathing techniques and created a personalised 'coping toolkit' with calming activities and comforting items.

CCF also supported her sister Auni, who attended art therapy sessions and received age-appropriate explanations of Aifa's illness. They also worked with their school to ease Aifa's reintegration and build empathy among her classmates.

"CCF didn't just support Aifa," Aisyah adds. "CCF supported all of us. As a caregiver, I didn't have to carry the weight alone."



(Aifa in KKH)

Hoping for a Gentle Tomorrow

Aifa is now preparing for her final rounds of chemotherapy. Her family hopes to celebrate her ninth birthday in November with just one wish: *no more cancer*.

"We don't need a big party," Aisyah says. "Just her health, her smile, and our family together again. That's enough."

By sharing their story, Aisyah hopes to comfort other caregivers walking the same path.

"This journey is lonely at times. But you are not alone. There are people who understand - who will cry with you, hope with you, and walk beside you, one day at a time."



**Children's
Cancer
Foundation**

Hair for Hope 2025 – Together, We Can

Stories like Aifa's are made possible because people choose to act.

Hair for Hope, Singapore's only head-shaving campaign for childhood cancer, returns to VivoCity on 26 and 27 July 2025. This year, we rally under the theme **"Together, We Can"** – marking Singapore's 60th birthday with a renewed call for solidarity and compassion.

Every shaved head is a bold statement of support for children with cancer. By stepping forward as a shavee, you stand in solidarity with them, raise awareness in your circles, and help fund vital services that make a real difference.

If you're not ready to shave, you can still be part of this movement. Donate, or support a friend who's taking the leap.

All funds raised from Hair for Hope goes towards CCF's five core pillars of support: psychosocial care, financial assistance, educational support, family engagement, and palliative and bereavement care.



**Children's
Cancer
Foundation**

Hair for Hope 2025 Main Event

Experience a meaningful day of inspiring stories, interactive activities, and engaging experiences - all in support of children battling cancer. Participate in thoughtfully curated activities, visit informative exhibits, and connect with the cause in a deeper way. Join us at the Hair for Hope 2025 Main Event and stand in solidarity with children and families impacted by childhood cancer.

Main Event Details

Date: 26 July 2025 (Saturday) and 27 July 2025 (Sunday)

Time: 11:00 am to 7:00 pm (Saturday), 11:00 am to 6:00 pm (Sunday)

Location: VivoCity

Be part of the change. Together, We Can.

Visit <https://hairforhope.org.sg/> or contact us at info@hairforhope.org.sg to show your support.

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