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Childhood cancer stories on MRT train to inspire people to shave heads in solidarity with survivors

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 Summarise 

SINGAPORE – Antonela was just three years old when she was diagnosed with stage four neuroblastoma in 2021. This is a cancer that develops in the nerve tissue and mainly affects children.

She fought hard for four years before dying at the age of seven in July 2025.

“She was a little warrior filled with bravery and courage. Despite her illness, she always led each day with smiles and joy,” said Ms Judy Tan, Antonela’s grandmother.

The 63-year-old homemaker, who is a Hair for Hope (HfH) ambassador, said that she wanted to stand in solidarity with other



children who go through similar journeys as Antonela.

HfH is an annual head-shaving campaign by Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF) to raise awareness and funds for childhood cancer.

Quotes from Ms Tan and two other HfH ambassadors – 16-year-old cancer survivor Iymran Firman and Mr Wu Tze Sien, whose son was diagnosed with neuroblastoma in 2013 and survived – are featured on an MRT train running on the Circle Line from May 4 to Aug 16.

The campaign's aim is to deliver to commuters a message of solidarity and support, with the initiative marking the first collaboration between CCF and SMRT Trains.

The HfH train includes QR codes which commuters can scan to get information and support the cause. Commuters can register to shave their head, donate to or volunteer with CCF.

Childhood cancer patients require volunteers, such as mentors and befrienders, said CCF chief executive Koh Shukai.

SMRT Trains president Lam Sheau Kai said: "SMRT is honoured to play a small part in this effort to support children with cancer and bring their stories of resilience and hope closer to our commuters."

At the HfH train launch event on May 4, Ms Tan said she hopes that commuters recognise that cancer has no boundaries and can hit anyone of any age.

"I want to support the children and let them know that it's okay to be bald. Being bald is temporary."

She adds: "For a little cancer fighter on the street, it will encourage them that the whole world is fighting for them."

Ms Yeo Wan Ling, assistant secretary-general of NTUC and Punggol GRC MP, said: It is important for children battling cancer to feel that there are people journeying with them.



Ms Judy Tan, grandmother of a CCF beneficiary, being comforted by Punggol GRC MP Yeo Wan Ling.

ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH

“It will not only lighten the hearts of our families going through something as devastating as cancer, but also remind every commuter to be kind, to be empathetic and to think in someone else’s shoes.”

Started in 2003, HfH is marking its 23rd year with its main head-shaving event at VivoCity on July 25 from 11am to 7pm, and on July 26 from 11am to 6pm.

Every year, CCF aims for 5,000 people to shave their heads, and to raise \$5 million.

So far in 2026, 1,500 have registered to shave their heads in solidarity, and the foundation has raised \$1.7 million. In 2025, it exceeded its goal, raising \$5.31 million, with 5,252 shaving their heads.

HfH 2026 kicked off on April 19 at Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery, where over 300 members of the public shaved their heads.
