

Sophie Phillips



Sophie takes a look at her new style

Sophie's new crop is the kindest cut by EMILY DENNIS, reprinted from the Eastern Daily Press, 19 July 2007

As with most teenage girls, **Sophie Phillips**'s hair is her crowning glory. The 14-year-old spent years growing her long brown tresses and described them as her "best asset".

But yesterday the plucky teenager did something that many girls her age simply would not contemplate - she shaved off her lustrous locks for a charity that makes hairpieces for children suffering from long-term medical hair loss.

Sophie, a pupil at Hartismere High School, in Eye, came up with the head-shave idea to raise money for the Somersham Ward at Ipswich Hospital where her grandfather, Brian Phillips, received wonderful care and support before his death from cancer in March, 2002.

But she didn't want to see her locks go to waste and decided to find a charity which specialises in using real hair to make wigs and hairpieces for children. She eventually settled on the American-based charity Locks of Love, which provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children who are suffering from long-term medical hair loss.

Most of the youngsters helped by the charity suffer from alopecia, an auto-immune condition which results in hair loss. Others have suffered severe burns, or endured radiation or chemotherapy to treat cancer, along with other dermatological conditions.

Sophie, from Occold, near Eye, said: "I particularly wanted my hair to go to a children's charity because, as a teenager myself, I know how much we hate to lose our hair. I decided that I would like to give someone the opportunity to get their self-esteem back.

"My godmother's sister who lives in America has used the charity several times so I heard about it through word of mouth. A lot of my friends couldn't believe it when I told them what I was planning to do as they couldn't live without their long hair. But I just thought how hard it must be for children who have lost their hair and how they are forced to live without it."

So far Sophie has raised more than **£700** in sponsorship in just a few weeks thanks to support from family, friends and well-wishers. Before going for the chop, Sophie said she considered her hair to be her best feature, but added she was not worried about losing her locks.

Family friend and hairdresser **Anita Field** lopped the teenager's hair off in chunks in the school hall, watched by Sophie's school friends, who paid to see her charity bid. Sophie's mum, **Lindsay Alexander**, and younger brother **Jamie**, 13, were also there. Despite vowing to stay strong throughout the cut, Sophie shed a few tears as she said goodbye to her tresses.

After looking in a mirror Sophie said: "I am so shocked, but I am glad I went through with it."

Ms Alexander said: "The whole family is so proud of Sophie. She is very brave." Sophie's hair will now be mailed to America.

On its website, [Locks of Love](#) says: "Our mission is to return a sense of self, confidence and normalcy to children suffering from hair loss by utilizing donated ponytails to provide the highest quality hair prosthetics to financially disadvantaged children. The prostheses we provide help to restore their self-esteem and their confidence, enabling them to face the world and their peers."



Sophie before her hair cut

Congratulations!