

# Ten-year-old's classmates rally behind her in cancer challenge

by John Bkila  
Oakville Beaver Staff

A group of young Oakville students recently rallied together in support of classmate Madison (Maddie) Costantini's battle with cancer.

Twenty Grade 5 students at École élémentaire Catholique Sainte-Marie in Oakville shaved their heads and had their hair cut, raising \$5,800 for 10-year-old Maddie, who was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour on her brainstem on Sept. 5, 2013 — just two days after she began Grade 5 and 12 days after completing a SunRype TRi Kids Triathlon.

"We were in complete disbelief and shock," said Maddie's mom, Sandra Costantini.

Sandra said she and her husband Doug were stunned. Maddie has an sister, Kayla, 8.

"We kept asking ourselves how could this be happening to Madison and how could we possibly deal with the thought of losing our little girl."

Maddie's classmates were just as shocked, especially Charles Bibeau, who spearheaded the fundraising initiative with his class.

"When we were told that Charles, who has been with Maddie since JK, had spearheaded this selfless fundraiser, it brought tears to our eyes," said Sandra.

Hair collected from the Shaved Head Challenge was donated to make wigs for children with cancer, while the funds raised will be used to support Maddie and her family.



Hairstylist Nadia Ferland shaves the head of Grade 5 student Charles Bibeau at École élémentaire catholique Sainte-Marie in Oakville. Charles spearheaded the initiative that saw 20 students shave their head or have their hair cut for classmate Maddie Costantini, who was recently diagnosed with cancer.

| submitted photos

"The challenge was a tangible way for students to try to make sense of the tragedy of seeing another 10-year-old dealing with a disease that we don't expect to see in someone so young," said

Annie Poirier, a parent on the Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est de l'Ontario school board.

Maddie underwent 30 sessions of radiation



Maddie Costantini

treatment from Sept. 11-Oct. 23, 2013 at Toronto's Princess Margaret Hospital.

"She is in good spirits now, is back to school and enjoys playing with her friends and sisters, like a 10-year-old should," said Sandra.

"This journey has been extremely surreal and emotional. The community of École Sainte-Marie has been incredibly supportive throughout this devastating time in our lives. They have undertaken numerous initiatives of raising money for our family and making delicious home cooked dinners.

"We cannot believe the support that continues to come from this loving community."

Anyone interested in donating to the cause can visit <http://maddiecakes.ca>.

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