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Salon Owner Shows A Lot of Heart

Hair Studio 409 owner Robert Curtis donates thousands of dollars worth of hair services to women's charitable organizations every year.

Robert Curtis, owner of Newport Beach's Hair Studio 409, gives away thousands of dollars worth of hair care services to women's charitable organizations every year. Human Options, Project Self-Sufficiency and the Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization are three groups that benefit from his generosity.

Curtis says the thing that he likes about these groups and why he became involved with them is that they were each founded to educate and empower women to take control of their lives.

"For almost two years, I've been working with Human Options, a group that works with battered women to teach them how to take care of themselves and their families," says Curtis. "This group does phenomenal things for women whose lives have been turned upside down by domestic violence. The group offers counseling and safe housing, and is there as a point of contact to help the women get out of abusive situations. I became involved through one of my clients who did volunteer work with the group. She told me about what they did and how their work positively affected women's lives. I created gift certificates for the group to give to those they help."

Though Curtis has provided many certificates, the response rate is fairly low with this group, which is something he understands completely.

"These women were hurt by the men in their lives," says Curtis. "They trusted the men not to injure them or cause devastation, so they feel deceived. They've lost their trust in men, and I'm a male stylist. However, I have female stylists on staff and available to provide hair services. If the women know that, maybe more of them will feel safe and take advantage of the certificates. I want to make these women feel better about themselves, and a good hair cut can go a long way in achieving that goal."

Curtis has been involved with another group, Project Self-Sufficiency, for almost four years now. He says the response rate to his gift certificates for this group is much higher.

"While the end goal of Project Self-Sufficiency is similar to that of Human Options, its focus isn't on battered women, but rather on women who need assistance in the financial and educational arenas of their lives," says Curtis. "The group provides financial aide and training into different jobs and careers. The group also provides mentoring and housing assistance; its goal in a nutshell is to make women to be self sufficient."

Every month, Project Self Sufficiency holds a drawing for a special gift basket. Hair Studio 409 gift certificates are included. Curtis says he plans to broaden his participation.

As for his involvement in Y-ME's efforts, Curtis provides a different type of service, one in which he partners with another local salon owner.

"In partnership with the owner of d'Orsay, The Art of Hair, just outside of Fashion Island in Newport Beach, I offer deep discounts on custom hair pieces to women who have lost or are losing their hair due to cancer treatments," says Curtis. "Together, we are committed to restoring something these women have lost that can help build their self esteem. We provided the group with special certificates for this service at last year's Rally Round 4 Life event, and plan to do the same this year. We like what the group stands for, providing breast cancer awareness, unique support groups, transportation to and from treatments, and financial assistance for oncology-related services to those in our community who wouldn't be able to afford them otherwise."

Curtis says that there are reasons he feels so strongly about being involved in groups that help women.

"Being involved in these groups gives me a way to give back to the community," explains Curtis. "Moreover, my personal experience growing up with a mother who took some pretty hard knocks at the hand of my stepfather taught me to stand up for women. By offering professional hair care services to women who might not otherwise seek them, my staff and I hope to affect some positive change in their lives."

Curtis explains further.

“I find that doing hair is not just about making a client look good,” says Curtis. “It’s more about feelings, and about what makes each individual feel good about herself. It is not about what I think looks good necessarily, but rather what makes the client feel good. A truly good stylist listens to his client and cares about how she feels about herself. It is up to the stylist to make her walk away from the salon feeling better about herself than when she walked in.”

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS:

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