Going bald for a cause

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More than 100 Tulane medical students and staff members will go bald in solidarity with pediatric cancer patients next month in one of the area's largest head-shaving fundraisers for the St. Baldrick's Foundation, a national volunteer-driven charity that funds research to cure childhood cancers.

Tulane medical students and staff annually shave their heads to support the St. Baldrick's Foundation and its work on behalf of pediatric cancer. (Photo by Sally Asher)

Organized entirely by first- and second-year students at the Tulane University School of Medicine, the event is scheduled for noon on Feb. 8 in the atrium lobby of Tulane Medical Center, 1415 Tulane Ave., New Orleans.

The head-shaving festivities will feature a silent auction, bake sale and event shirt sales to raise money to build a "boundless playground" at Tulane Medical Center so that all children seeking treatment at the hospital, including those with disabilities, will have a safe and fun place to play.

"In the past four years, Tulane students and staff have raised more than $253,000 for St. Baldrick's with a total of 573 heads shaved," says student organizer Maja Katusic. "We're hoping to surpass $300,000 this year by raising more than $60,000, but we need as many people as we can to help us reach that goal."

Members of the public are invited to join students in donating or participating by having their heads shaved. Some of the youngest oncology patients will also be on hand to help volunteer stylists lead the shearing and cheer on students.

Worldwide, more than 160,000 children are diagnosed with cancer each year, and it remains the leading cause of death by disease among children in the United States. St. Baldrick's grants provide institutions with resources to enable them to conduct more research and enroll more kids in ongoing clinical trials ? their best hope for a cure.