

# Charity event sets up \$10,000 haircut

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THOMAS HART, a burly bear of a man with infectious enthusiasm, knows the long and short of letting his hair down -- especially when it comes to a good cause.

His thick, curly blond hair was long before he showed up for a gala dinner auction at the Bellevue Hyatt last Friday and short when he left, his trademark ponytail gone.

It was shorter still Sunday after the gregarious Hart was shorn publicly between sets of the "Rock 'n Ride" music festival at the White River Amphitheatre in Auburn.

It was all part of the 13th Children's Ride, a four-day event that raised \$600,000 for Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center.

The 42-year-old Hart, who lives in Lake Stevens with his wife, Wendy, a strategic recruiter for Microsoft, is "Mr. Mom" to the couple's 23-month-old twin daughters.

When friends David and Celeste Michel, who own Dacels Jewelers in Bellevue, told Hart they would make a donation at the auction if he'd cut his ponytail off, Hart took them up on the offer.

He figured he'd raise a "couple of hundred dollars" for the auction and donate the hair to Locks of Love.

Then, Hart says, "Something happened."

The bidding war got spirited. Matt Schneider, a Seattle fishing-boat salesman and his wife, Sylvia Bolton, a yacht designer, won with a bid for \$6,500.

Schneider cut a deal: He'd take the bid to \$10,000 if he could give Hart a Mohawk at the concert.

Hart, Schneider and Bolton were among the motorcyclists who turned out for Sunday's escorted ride from Qwest Field to Auburn.

It turns out, what Hart got wasn't a Mohawk but a buzz cut.

"Right now it's maybe an eighth of an inch long," says Hart, who admits he's in the market for skullcaps. "Most people say they like it. But I don't."

Then he laughs.

Call that consummate Thomas, Wendy Hart says.

"He's big and he looks like the Harley dude -- a mustache and long hair, a jean jacket with patches," she says. "He's an outgoing big teddy bear. I don't think anybody in that audience would have thought cutting off somebody's hair would bring in that much money.

"People just glommed on to his energy and spirit."