

CANSA Shavathon & Sprayathon 2026 – Twelve years strong

A new year, a new CANSA Shavathon; our biggest annual charity event! Although one may think that an occasion that is hosted as often as yearly may lose its appeal over time, this one never seems to go out of style (not that a charity event should be stylish, or have any fanfare attached to it), but this one garners support in the best way. Whether you've been deeply affected by the disease or whether you're supporting someone who has (directly or indirectly) been affected, it's something that remains close to many people's hearts.

Getting involved means different things to different people but mostly it means creating a space of coming together for the greater good of the community and being involved in something that is bigger than ourselves. Our learners participated with love in their hearts, and smiles on their faces, all the while remembering the reasons behind being there; raising funds for The Cancer Association of South Africa, showing support for those in need, and doing something ultimately selfless.

From shaved heads and crazy sprayed designs, to generous donations, we are proud of our BESA Bears for showing their unwavering commitment to the event and to the broader community.

Now for a fairly lighthearted review of all the happenings of the day...

Let's set the scene: a mild morning at BESA Leadership Academy on the grassy knoll outside the office block; two stations await (one for shaving, one for spraying) with eager Grade 12s ready for their first customers. Enter Marcus. Enter 'barber' Ashton with a razor. Enter chaos.



Just some of our matric sprayers and 'sprayees' who made the day as successful as it was.



The Shaving Station – Foreground to background: Ashton and Marcus, Simphiwe and Katlego, Jayden and Henry-Carl, and CJ.

For those of us who are not familiar with Marcus, we need to clarify one or two things; one – the boy is game for anything, two – the boy is game for anything. Like anything. So why would an opportunity to shave your head be any different? However, it became a touch 'different' when 'barber' Ashton got creative with the shaving job he was doing and who ended up giving his 'client' a haircut that, as Mr Knight described, was 'giving Alabama' (um which according to the cool kids means: *a tongue-in-cheek backwards haircut*). But for a more concrete description, it perhaps looked like a ferret laying on top of his head with a long tail that culminated in a terribly executed 'zero' on either side of his neckline. Marcus, being the ever-game champ that he is, not only embraced his new look but decided that it should be **enhanced by some luminous yellow and black spray** colour making him look somewhat like a bee ferret (which should not be confused with an 'A' ferret...we know, we're hilarious). But all things considered, if there was an A-list of ferrets, this one definitely wouldn't be on it. It was more like a C-lister on a bad day when all the A and B-listers were mostly absent. That's enough talk about ferrets.

Then there was a new Grade 10 learner (who shall not be named for privacy rights) who was keen to get involved and shave his head for the greater good. But his barber (who shall also not be named) was seemingly having trouble with his razor; for whatever reason the 'number 2' clipper just didn't want to do the whole 'shaving some hair thing' effectively. So, as any would-be barber can be excused for trying, he who shall not be named, took the clipper blade off and tried using just the razor itself, no protective cover, you know, just to 'kinda see what happens' if he tried using it now that nothing was on it.

Was it the razor that was the problem? Was it the barber? Was it the 'number 2' clipper? We weren't sure ourselves at the time, however, what we were sure of was that this was probably not going to end well once the cover was removed. And guess what? It didn't end well. Nope. Poor old 'Grade 10 learner' who originally signed up for a 'number 4' which could maybe be upgraded to a 'number 2' depending on how he felt after the 'number 4', was now a 'number zero' down the back of his head. The rest of the story, well, you can imagine how it ended, **but there were tears, we're not going to lie...**

There were moments of sadness but there were also moments of joy – starting with one Miss Briers, who was all like "I'm going to donate my ponytail today"...and we were all like "Whaaaaaat?! No way!", and she was all like, "Waaaaaay!", and we were all like "Whaaat?! No way!" (again), and she was all like "Waaaaaay!" (again). How awesome is that? Miss Briers's generous ponytail donation was followed by Ashleigh's (in Grade 8) generous ponytail donation, which was followed by Madison's (in Grade 12) generous ponytail donation. This is where we have to, and we mean *have to* **make a big deal**. A big show-stopping deal. Well, it's more of an 'interrupting an article's flow stopper' but it's so totally worth it. Madison Brink donated her ponytail for the second time in her five years at our school! Like "Whaaaaaaat?!" That is just super amazing. Just awesome. Just fantastic. Well done Mads! And thank you for your service.

Which brings us to another 'interrupting an article's flow stopper' moment. Enter Kyle and Cayden (both in Grade 12). If there ever

was a **lifetime achievement award** that could be associated with the CANSA Shavathon, we feel like this should be it. You see, these gentlemen not only shaved their heads this year, but they did so last year too, and the year before that, and the year before that, and, also, the year before that (when they joined our school in Grade 8) which translates to **five years of shaving**. That's a high school lifetime...and a lifetime achievement award that is. Phenomenal! Well done gents. And thank you as well for your service to the cause!

Speaking of long-term service, one **Mr Knight**, if we're not mistaken, is well on his way to achieving an aforementioned *lifetime achievement award* of his own after shaving and donating for the **third year in a row**; a couple more and he will become the first staff member to achieve such a feat of five consecutive shaving years. We believe in you, sir! And thank you for keeping the staff Shavathon flag flying high this year along with **Miss Briers** (as already mentioned), and **Mrs Senior Preddy** (who also sprayed her hair – a delightful luminous orange), and **some other old guy** from the LO department who also got involved towards the end. Said 'old guy' opted to get his hair sprayed a glittery silver, and while he happened to be at the mercy of the Grade 12 sprayers, received a beard treatment of the same colour. The comments received about his new look were interesting; ranging from Father Christmas (or Santa), to Abraham Lincoln, to George Clooney, to (and we quote) a 'hot Ryan Reynolds'. Whoooooah! Wait. What?! We're not experts on attractiveness but we're pretty sure Ryan Reynolds is already pretty 'up there' in the look departments so we're pretty sure the old guy will take it because we're of the opinion that he looked pretty much more like one of those silver spray-painted mime-statue-performer-people who entertain passers-by at amusement parks. Don't believe us? **Check out the picture below** and be your own judge. Also, we just used the word 'pretty' four times in a sentence above to describe somebody whose surname sounds eerily similar. It's purely coincidental though...

Some old guy...



There were many **amazing contributions** from our learners over the course of the event which featured many different approaches from those who chose to participate. There were some 'sprayees' (which is a term that we've literally just made up to describe people receiving hair spray) who went 'all in' with one colour, and then there were those who felt that 'the more colours being sprayed the merrier'. Either way though, one can never be fully prepared for the potential appearance-altering effects that a simple spray can can produce (English for the win; because can and can can be next to each other in the same sentence and make complete sense). It can! But we digress...

Back to the look-changing effects of a spray can. There was one learner in Grade 11 (who goes by the name of David)...um, so that first sentence is literally irrelevant because he could have just been introduced as 'David'...but we digress again. Anyways, David, (no inverted commas this time) after having his hair sprayed completely black could **quite easily have been an entirely different person**. His look had changed so significantly that we found ourselves doing a 'triple-take' to try and establish who he was. He might have changed his name to 'Brad' or 'Chad' or something equally random because for a few hot seconds, to those around him he may well have appeared to have been a Brad, or Chad, or Ben, or Steve, or Adam. Definitely not a David...

The same can be said for those who were once sporting a full head of hair and then who weren't anymore. One of the Grade 8 learners, who started the day with a moderate set of curls ended the day with 'not any curls anymore' and a CANSA Shavathon bandana wrapped around his forehead, **looked more like a Survivor contestant** than anything else and who we half expected to start building a bonfire and start looking for some rice to cook in a dodgy steel pot. Good times...

But these are the moments that cannot be planned for. **These are the times that cannot be recreated and that cannot be scripted**. And these are the times that we will remember and take with us as we continue to navigate this thing called life.

So, all-in-all, the day was a resounding success. We managed to raise a significant amount of money that will go towards serving those who need it most...although a case can be made for the purchasing of some new shaving equipment maybe; those razors are now in excess of seven years old and evidently, as mentioned in the case of the poor Grade 10 learner above (who lost more of his hair than he bargained for), might be worth replacing before the next installment of the Shavathon. Either that or using a pair of scissors found in the depths of somebody's bag that haven't been used in years because they went into the 'lost stationery abyss' that nobody ever has any idea of where they went or how they went there. Those might be sharper than our razors...

Check out the awesome pics in the next column!



Top to bottom:
'Bee ferret' Marcus; Grade 8s - Sian, Kelsey, Alexia, Anesu; Monisha spraying Riley's hair; Deepesh; and Pari and Tyla.