

PEOPLE / ATLANTA

Charity helps seniors save face

Beauty Becomes You offers haircuts, manicures at no charge

By H.M. Cauley
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Several puzzle pieces had to fall in place before Alison O'Neil Andrew saw the big picture and knew she should start a nonprofit for senior citizens.

The result was Beauty Becomes You, which she started three years ago to bring beauty services to low-income men and women.

One of the first pieces was the name. It came from her father, who died of cancer in 2004. "I spent the last nine months of his life with him and my mother," Andrew said. "One day, we were working in the garden and he said to me, 'Alison, beauty becomes you.' I'd never heard anyone say those words to me before. He meant it as a thank you and a message that what you do with your life makes you beautiful."

Another piece came during a job interview Andrew, a Norcross clinical skin care specialist, had with the Estee Lauder cosmetics company. "I always wanted to work for them because, when I was 7, I was lost in a department store and the Estee Lauder person helped me and made me feel so much better," she said. "But when I talked about my work as an aesthetic rehabilitation specialist, working with people who have lost their appearance through chronic illness, accidents or deformity, they suggested I start a charity."

One of the last pieces came six months later, during a visit to a local senior center.

"In a dark corner, I saw two shampoo bowls and a manicure and pedicure stand," said Andrew. "The director told me they couldn't get staff or product. That's when I finally knew I wanted to work with seniors to make them happy by giving these services."

Since Beauty Becomes You began, Andrew has worked with volunteers to provide haircuts, manicures, pedicures, massages, facials and makeup lessons to more than 800 seniors.

The services are done at seniors' residences, for both men and women.

"We've worked with people from 60 to as old as 102," said Andrew. "And the men love it, too! They are waiting in line for manicures and pedicures — even facials, though they admit they never imagined having one."

In addition to running the nonprofit, Andrew still manages a private dermatology practice, is working on a book, "Glamor to Grace," and consults on cases across the country.

She also creates various ways to support her charitable efforts, from planning a bike ride for seniors in June to organizing a polo match in the fall. On April 24, she'll host the Elegant Ladies Hat Luncheon at the Swan Coach House.

"This isn't just about providing hair, skin and nail care," said Andrew. "We're showing people that seniors have value. We're working hard to change the way society looks at seniors."

4 fun facts about ... Alison O'Neil Andrew

1. She loves fly-fishing and has a large fly collection.
2. An avid cyclist, she participates in organized bike rides that cover 55 to 75 miles in two days.
2. She and her husband, John, a wildlife biologist, were married on Earth Day.
4. Her pets are two yellow Labs.