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Human Hair Donations Being Used To Clean Up Oil Spill

Socially conscious hair salon owners are getting more creative and resourceful than ever in their passion to make the world more eco-friendly.

Michael Angelo Hair Studio of Tampa, Florida is doing its part to prevent environmental disaster stemming from the current Gulf of Mexico oil spill by partnering with Matter of Trust, a non-profit organization that assists in oil spill cleanup by promoting eco-sustainability.

The salon is gathering hair clippings from South Tampa community members and clients to donate to Matter of Trust so the strands can be transformed into thick mats that will aid in relief efforts by soaking up mucky deposits of oil.

"Living in an area with such a delicate ecosystem, we are naturally concerned with the Florida coastline, as it is our own backyard. We are taking strides as a salon to establish greener alternatives to run our business. Contributing our excess hair clippings to Matter of Trust correlates perfectly with our environmental policies," salon owner Michael Angelo tells StyleList.

Alabama hairstylist Phil McCrory first stumbled upon the discovery of how well hair absorbs oil spills when he observed that fur on Alaskan otters was fully saturated with oil after the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill. After experiments to see how much oil he could sop up with hair clippings, he invented the hairmat to effectively clean up oil-spilled waters.

Since then, Matter of Trust has collected hair clipping donations and shipped them to nonwoven needlepunch factories where they are woven into hairmats for oil spill use. Booms are also created from loose hair that is stuffed into nylon stockings and then doubled up and tied together to absorb oil too.

In order to speed up the process, Matter of Trust is now raising funds to buy their own needlepunch machines in order to make the oil relief hair supplies at their California-based headquarters. The company says that doing so will also create many jobs and educational training for California citizens.

"The U.S. has over 300,000 hair salons, and each cuts an average of a pound of hair per day. By finding a local salon near you that is participating in our donor program, you can help make a difference in the ecosystem and help prevent further damage from oil spills that continue to aggressively destroy coastal water ways," said Matter of Trust in a statement.

To find out how you can donate, visit the Matter of Trust website.

And in times when there is no oil spill crisis to address, the company turns hair donations into fertilizer, which they claim is a high source of protein for soil and prevents water evaporation by 50% -- thereby reducing and sometimes even eliminating the need for chemical herbicides and fertilizers.

Who knew a haircut could help save the world?



Over 500 concerned citizens using hairmats to clean up during the Cosco Busan Oil Spill on Ocean Beach in San Francisco. Photo: Courtesy of Matter of Trust

