

BEAUTY

LAUNCHPAD

November 2014
beautylaunchpad.com

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF INTERCOIFFURE

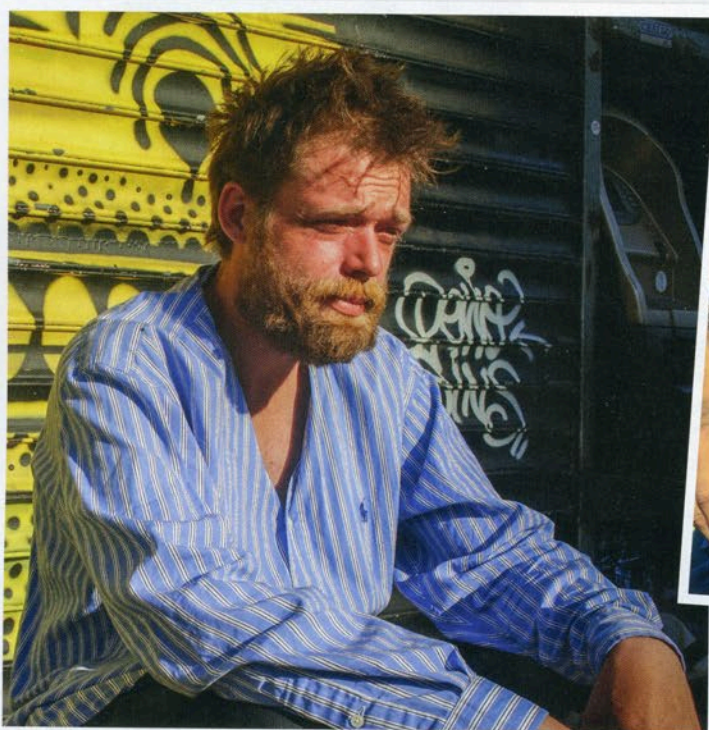
THE HOLIDAY ISSUE!

Party-perfect hair,
makeup & nails

IN THE BAG

Travel-size products

Exclusive collections
Q&A with Mark Bustos
Make over your salon on a dime



Mark Bustos' transformative haircuts for homeless men and women are helping to humanize the face of poverty.



Life Is Beautiful

A stylist at New York City's Three Squares Studio, Mark Bustos spends every Sunday offering free haircuts to men and women who are living on the streets. His kindness and empathy will amaze you. —AMY DODDS

Tell *Launchpad* readers about yourself. How did you get into the industry? What made you want to become a stylist?

I started doing hair out of my parents' garage in Nutley, New Jersey, when I was 14 years old. My first clients were my two best friends. I gave them awful haircuts! As I progressed, I started cutting hair for the basketball team, then the whole freshman class, then the whole school, then surrounding towns, and it kept growing! By doing hair at a young age, I was able to bring people together, even rival groups and cliques. Even if people didn't like each other, if they were in my garage getting a haircut, they were forced to get along—otherwise they weren't going to get a haircut! Having the ability to bring people together made me want to become a stylist. Doing hair is all about human interaction and human connection.

After high school, I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in business management at Kean University. But I've known from a very young age that I wanted to have my own salon one day. I've never made a penny in my life that didn't have something to do with hairstyling. I never had a job doing anything else in my entire life. After college, I then went to Artistic Academy [in Morris Plains, New Jersey] to become a licensed cosmetologist. And from there, I invested my own money to travel nationally and internationally to attend advanced hair courses.

What motivated you to begin offering free haircuts to people who are homeless?

It all began on a vacation to the Philippines with my girlfriend Lucille Javier, who happens to be a super-talented color specialist at Sally Hershberger Downtown in NYC. I had an idea to give back to less fortunate children while I was there. Lucille, who is half Filipino, and I went to a barbershop where her recently deceased father used to get his hair cut. We rented out a chair in the shop and worked next to the local barbers for the day. We had less fortunate children come into the shop for free haircuts that day. The feeling was so rewarding that I decided to bring it back home to NYC and every other destination we travel to on vacation (Jamaica, Costa Rica, Los Angeles).

How do you approach people on the streets, and what are their reactions?

The approach is very simple. It's the same way you would speak to your best friend who desperately needs your help. It is very important to approach in a warm and compassionate manner. I sit down and speak to people at eye level. The first thing I say to homeless individuals is, "I want to do something nice for you today." It always starts with friendly conversation before a haircut is offered. If they do not want to receive a haircut, we leave them with a homemade care package that consists of daily essentials



Bustos makes a point of cutting people's hair on busy sidewalks to increase awareness and empathy toward those less fortunate.

that we may often take for granted: toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, hand sanitizers, etc.

What tools and products do you use and why?

I carry one pair of scissors and two cordless Wahl

Designer clippers. If one clipper runs out of battery, I have a backup. The battery life on each clipper is really great. Each clipper, fully charged, is capable of completing five to seven full haircuts. I bring a disinfectant spray to clean my tools between haircuts. It is also important to bring a wide-tooth comb in case the hair is matted or knotted. I bring two spray bottles—one with water, the other with alcohol. I also bring a dry shampoo to spray into hair to clean and style. A

cutting cape and a clean towel for each haircut is also important.

Is there a most-memorable moment?

One of the most memorable moments was with a man named Jemar. I cut his hair in a park in the Lower East Side. He didn't have much to say and only spoke when he was spoken to. After seeing his transformed look after the haircut, the first thing he said to me was, "Do you know anybody that is hiring? I want to get a job."

Tell us about #BeAwesomeToSomebody.

#BeAwesomeToSomebody is the hashtag I came up with for people to share photos of themselves performing random acts of kindness. It is a platform for individuals to be inspired by others by sharing photos of themselves using their talents and gifts to pay it forward and give back to fellow human beings who are in need of help. I happen to be a hairstylist, but my goal is to inspire others by showing people how simple it really is to share their gifts and talents.

I notice a lot of homeless men featured in your Instagram feed. What about homeless women and children?

I do come across homeless women on the street as well. And I, of course, give them haircuts also. This past Mother's Day, I walked around NYC for three hours in search of a homeless mother living on the streets. It was the best Mother's Day gift I ever gave anybody! It is safe to say that in my own personal experience, I find many more

men living on the streets. I thankfully do not come across homeless children who live on the streets. I purposely do my work on street corners and sidewalks and parks so I can inspire people walking by. My goal is to break the barrier between the less fortunate and fortunate. I want to show others that it is OK to smile and say hello and acknowledge those who are living on the streets.

How has your life changed since your story became international news?

My outlook on life has changed dramatically since my story became international news. I was given a rare opportunity as a hairstylist to really help change the world. Rather than being behind the scenes like we stylists usually are, I was given a platform to stand on to share my gift and passion with the world. The feeling of using my God-given talent to put a smile on someone's face is priceless. And having been given the voice and opportunity, it is now my responsibility to continue exactly what I've been doing—to change the world one haircut at a time.

Have you received any messages from people who want to do or are doing the same thing as you in their community? If so, how does that make you feel?

I have! It makes me feel like I've been successful in sharing my message. I smile from ear to ear and I'm so overjoyed when I receive messages and photos of other stylists who have followed or plan on following what was once my own personal mission. We as stylists need to all come together and become a team! Imagine if every single stylist did just one haircut on the street or in shelters, how many lives would we uplift and empower?!



Above: Bustos combs out 23-year-old Zach's "matted, tangled hair." Right: Zach said after the cut: "I feel so great, not just physically, but emotionally...can you take a photo of me with your phone so I can send it to that girl I was telling you about?"

