

24 Hours in Toledo

KUT-N-UP HAIR STUDIO [10 TO 11 A.M.]

Looking good at the salon

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A girl's gotta have her priorities.

For Ebonee Bush, that means sitting here sleepless and hungry at Kut-N-Up Hair and Nails Studio on Sylvania Avenue. She's been up all night working and hasn't had a chance to get some shut-eye. Her breakfast, a bottle of Pepsi and a bag of potato chips, remains uneaten at her feet.

But she's here at 10 a.m., and sometime soon her hair will thank her for it.

The proprietor of this salon — “Dr. Jean Cason-Coats” as it says on the store window — isn't here yet, but already her customers are being readied for her arrival by her assistant.

Janice Hughes, 48, got here almost two hours ago. If it had been a weekend, she would have been sitting out front even earlier to get the first chair. She wants to get in and out — and look good all day long.

“That's the one thing I do for myself,” she says. “I'm going to treat myself to get my hair done every week.”

It's Mrs. Hughes' day off from work as a supervisor at Libbey Glass, so it's a time for pampering. She sits down quietly at the hair dryer with a book for a class she's taking at Lourdes College.

Kut-N-Up is a pretty sedate place at this hour. There are some issues of *Essence* and *Jet* magazine sitting around, but no one is reading them. There's a television with some DVDs, but it's not on. There's a desk for having nails done — price listed for acrylic on little toes: “You Don't Want to Know” — but there's no one there.

Then the 65-year-old Ms. Cason-Coats whirls through the door. She's wearing a sparkling white tie, black vest, and bright red shirt that echoes the rosy tints of her hair toward the top.

“There she is, Miss America!” someone sings from the back.

MULTIMEDIA

[See and hear more about Kut-N-Up between 10 and 11 a.m.](#)

Ms. Cason-Coats stops cold, sensing an audience.

“I had to bribe my dog back into the house!” she says.

Then she laughs. Oh, does she laugh — a wonderful, irrepressible, bellyache of a laugh that shakes smiles onto the

faces of everyone else in the room.

Turns out her dog Babet got out this morning and wouldn't come back inside.

“I had to trick her,” Ms. Cason-Coats says. “I had to bait her with a piece of bacon.”

No need to bait these customers. Most have been coming for years, along with many of their family members.

“If I do the mother, I do her daughter, her granddaughter,” says Ms. Cason-Coats, who has been cutting hair professionally for more than 35 years. She started doing her mother's friends when she was 13.

As she waits for her curling iron to heat up — she has 22 lying around — Ms. Cason-Coats tells her customers,



Jean Cason-Coats chats with patrons under hair dryers at the Kut-N-Up salon on Sylvania Avenue. (THE BLADE/ALLAN DETRICH)

sitting with their heads in hair dryer machines, about a recent trade show she went to and hands out a couple of books she picked up showing various hair styles. Then she plops down in a chair and holds forth, like a queen.

“Hair is a priority for women. It has no color barrier. Fashion is in. It always will be for women,” she says.

Meanwhile, Ms. Hughes is quietly reading a book. Ms. Bush is eating some chips. And Maggie Woods, well, Ms. Woods is sleeping. A couple of moments later she jolts awake.

“I always go to sleep when I get on the dryer,” the 59-year-old says, before drifting back to Neverland.

Ms. Cason-Coats does most of the talking, staying away from gossip and too much personal stuff.

“This is a black salon so we talk about black things, black issues,” she says. That includes children, education, jobs.

“We talk about the president too.”

Politics makes an appearance on this day when someone recommends presidential candidate Barack Obama’s books.

“I got both of ’em, girl,” Ms. Cason-Coats says.

She’s ready to weigh in on anything from the latest fashions — leggings and empire dresses are back, she declares — to the Will Smith movie, *The Pursuit of Happyness*.

“I got so tired of him running,” she says. “He was a running fool.”

The first to actually sit down for a trim is 21-year-old Ciera Jones, who’s been coming to Ms. Cason-Coats since she was 2.

“I always know what I’m going to get coming here,” she says.

That’s what it always comes down to. Not the conversation. Not the location. Not a Will Smith movie or a presidential candidate’s book.

It’s all about the hair.

So Ms. Cason-Coats combs the young woman’s hair straight up and starts to snip away.

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Ms. Cason-Coats curls Janice Hughes' hair. (THE BLADE/ALLAN DETRICH)

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