



PHOTOS BY WILLIAM F. WEST/ROCKY MOUNT TELEGRAM

Toddler Ezra Morales gets a haircut from Edgecombe Community College Barbering Instructor Rufus McKoy as one of his students, Dimahnies Fleming, watches. Seated and holding the youngster is his father, Luis Morales.

# A Little Off the Top

## Toddler's first haircut courtesy of college's holiday outreach

**WILLIAM F. WEST**  
Staff Writer

A toddler with curly locks recently got his first haircut at the barbering lab on the Rocky Mount campus of Edgecombe Community College.

Ezra Morales, who is 18 months old, benefitted from a free holiday season haircut offered to children Saturday at the recently upgraded facility at the eastern edge of downtown. The ECC Barbering Club sponsored the outreach effort.

Morales' father, Luis, who held his son in his lap while the youngster received his haircut, was proud of the result immediately afterward.

"Oh man, it was amazing," the father said. Additionally, the father spoke about being surprised about how calm and patient his son was while receiving the haircut and about being proud of how his son reacted to the whole experience.



Ezra Morales watches as he gets a haircut from McKoy.

Luis Morales and his fiancée, Nikole Freudenberger, both of Tarboro, had brought in a trio of children to check out the event.

One of the children, a 9-year-old boy, got a free haircut and a free pair of sneakers. The other child, also a boy, is three months old and remained in a baby carriage.

Asked whether he and his fiancée would return to the barbering lab, Luis Morales said, "A hundred percent."

Freudenberger found

out via social media about the offer of free haircuts and said Saturday she was impressed with the lab, which is designed to resemble a barbershop.

"I wasn't expecting it to look like this, to be honest, but it looks really good," Freudenberger said. "It's really nice and clean, too."

ECC Barbering Instructor Rufus McKoy did the early part of the haircut of Ezra Morales and one of his students, Dimahnies Fleming, watched before doing the final part.

McKoy said afterward

that from time to time, families bring their children in for a first haircut.

"And sometimes that first haircut sets the pace for the next particular barber," McKoy said, noting that an unpleasant experience could set the stage for future haircuts to be unpleasant as well.

"But if they have a pleasant experience such as what we had today, that's going to follow into the next barber," McKoy said.

Fleming of Wilson said that Ezra Morales was the youngest client he's helped.

"I'm glad that I was able to get that experience in and kind of see what goes into giving somebody a first haircut, especially a kid that young," Fleming said.

Fleming also said he appreciated having McKoy there "to kind of walk me through it and show me some of the techniques that go into it."

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Edgecombe Community College barbering student Justin Edwards begins trimming the back of Carter Oliver's head.

## Haircut/

Fleming said that he is going to be working at Kings & Queens Barber Shop in Wilson.

He said that when he was younger, his mother sometimes would give him haircuts.

He spoke of having appreciated the enhancement of his appearance at the start of the school year and before going to social gatherings.

Also getting a free haircut was Carter Oliver, 12, who is an A.G. Cox Middle School student in Pitt County Schools.

When asked his reaction afterward to the haircut, Oliver said, "It's kind of amazing and kind of cool."

Oliver's mother, Genell Oliver, said that her sister,

Lisa Jenkins, who is an ECC instructor in nursing, told her about the outreach effort.

Genell Oliver said that she did not know the barbering lab existed.

Asked what she thought about the lab, she said, "It's beautiful. It's set up well — very inviting."

She said that she would love to bring her son back for future haircuts.

Along with the haircut, Carter Oliver also received a pair of free sneakers.

McKoy said that the sneakers were donated by pro basketball player Montrezl Harrell, who in 2022 opened an athletic shoe store in the 100 block of Southeast Main Street downtown.

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Oliver receives a haircut from barbering student Edwards.