

AN ASTRONOMICAL AFRO

How Pattonville senior Tyler Wright received the title of world's largest afro

SOPHIA LIU
in-depth editor

From the back, Pattonville High School senior Tyler Wright's ears and profile are entirely obscured by a puffy cloud of hair. Forever immortalized in the 2017 Guinness Book of World Records, Pattonville High School senior Tyler Wright holds the Guinness World Record title for the largest male afro.

Wright began growing an afro in third grade after seeing a picture of his father at a similar age. The two resembled each other so much that Wright sought to emulate his father's afro and style. Five years later, on June 19, 2015, measuring 10 inches tall, 9 inches wide and 5 feet 10 inches in total circumference, Wright's afro was deemed the new record holder.

"My school's library had a shelf of world record books and I stumbled across the female holder of the record," Wright said. "I had already been growing out my afro for a few years when I came across the record; it was sort of a nonchalant decision to go for it."

However, Wright's journey to acquire the world's largest afro wasn't as simple as waiting for his hair to grow. To ensure healthy hair, Wright's hair was subject to different types of maintenance and styling. Wright credits his mother, Rhonda Wright, for supporting his endeavors in attaining the record.

"African American hair is really thick and curly; there's just a lot of it," Rhonda Wright said. "He didn't usually wear it as an afro because it was just too much; I would twist it or

braid it for him to wear. He went through a lot of pain to achieve this record."

Every year, Guinness World Records flies a group of record holders out to New York for television show appearances and press interviews. In eighth grade at the time, Tyler Wright's title stood out enough that he was selected for the all-expenses-paid trip to New York, encountering his first taste of stardom.

"I had two to three interviews a day — it was very busy," Tyler Wright said. "I met the record holders for the two most tattooed senior citizens; I heard stories of their tattoos and thought it was pretty neat. It was an experience-riddled trip."

Some notable interviews during the three-day trip included a Facebook live, a Huffington Post podcast and a Spanish news station where Tyler Wright's record was first publicly announced to the world.

"He did so many television show appearances; he was like a celebrity," Rhonda Wright said. "People would approach and run up to him, put their arms around him or touch his hair. When we visited the Statue of Liberty on the ferry, people were circling around and trying to take a picture with him."

Tyler Wright parted with his afro in 2017, having realized his dream of being a Guinness World Record holder. However, until challenged, Tyler Wright will continue to hold the title of world's largest male afro.

"I cut my hair freshman year; I could tell I was growing up," Tyler Wright said. "But when [the record] happened, it was a really big event for us." 📷



9 inches



Moisturize



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TYLER'S HAIR CARE TIPS

The inside scoop on getting your hair huge



Illustration by JOANNE SUNG

17 inches

FAST FACTS ON THUMBELINA

Get to know the world's smallest horse

1. Favorite Snacks: carrots and apples



2. Diet: 1 cup grain with a handful of hay twice a day and extra oats



3. Favorite Place: dog house (that she stole from the barn dog, Cassie)



TYLER'S HOBBIES

Who Tyler is, outside of his massive hair

- 1. Swims** on his school's swim team
- 2. Plays the Violin** in his school symphonic orchestra
- 3. Shoots Barebow Archery**, and is a three-time state champion

SMALL BUT MIGHTY

A look into the life of the world's smallest horse

MARISSA MATHIESON
in-depth editor

Shock and concern flooded Goose Creek Farm in St. Louis, Missouri one morning as the Goessling family discovered what they initially thought was a possum in the corner of the stall. Instead, a 6 inch, 8 pound Brown Sorrel Mare named Thumbelina emerged.

"When she was born it was hard to believe that a horse could be a few inches tall," Thumbelina's handler Michael Goessling said. "I couldn't get my head around what it was ... every aspect of it was something completely unexpected and new."

Due to Thumbelina's dwarfism and her abnormal size, the Goessling family was unsure she would survive. Thumbelina was so small she couldn't even reach her mother to nurse, yet her mother uncharacteristically laid down to help her.

"Thumbelina surpassed any expectation," Michael Goessling said. "Every day was a blessing because you're not sure when she wasn't going to be around anymore, and years passed and she got around just fine — in fact, she ruled the roost."

In 2005, the Goessling family contacted the Guinness Book of World Records and received a certificate for the world's smallest horse. Along with the certificate, an adjudicator brought Goliath, the world's largest horse at the time.

"She really was fearless," Michael Goessling said. "When Thumbelina reared up and tried to bite [Goliath] on the nose, he ran off and we got scared because he was so big and we thought he might trample her."

After receiving the certificate, "Fox and Friends," a Fox News program, paid for Thumbelina to visit New York. From there, her fame skyrocketed. She appeared on "The

Today Show" and "Good Morning America," and people from around the world began calling the farm.

"For the rest of her life people would constantly come by the farm and visit, but since it was a private residence, people couldn't just pay to roam around," Michael Goessling said. "And of course, the media got interested as well."

The sudden uptake in Thumbelina's media presence led Micheal Goessling to take time off to travel with Thumbelina to visit kids in need. After retrofitting their RV with a specialized horse ramp, the pair travelled to 48 states and over 260 youth camps.

"That little girl travelled 65,000 miles [and] visited 650 institutions and camps — and did it with just so much grace, which was remarkable," Michael Goessling said. "She was a great advocate for children in need and brought so much joy to children who were truly suffering,"

But this isn't all Thumbelina did; the Goessling family had plans to raise \$1 million for children's charities with the help of Thumbelina. While doing so, Thumbelina was able to develop a close connection with the kids.

"As scrappy as she was, she truthfully had a sense around kids and could tell when someone was hurt or suffering," Michael Goessling said. "She was so calm, peaceful and just so loving to all of these kids."

At age 18, Thumbelina's health started deteriorating, and eight months later she passed away. However, her impact didn't leave the hearts of those who met her.

"Parents [would] say [that] sitting with Thumbelina was the happiest moment their child ever had," Michael Goessling said. "This little horse could make magic happen for these kids; nothing gave them that comfort, joy and peace that Thumbelina somehow could. It was extraordinary." 📷

10 inches