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Deadly headache

Aneurysm will bring emotional as well as physical pain

By Diane Gale
staff writer

After a cerebral aneurysm, the victims who survive the war to live still have emotional battles to overcome.

Two Livonia women, Sharon Trembath and Regina Caprara, have joined with Marilyn Lighton of Grosse Pointe Farms to start a support group, Cerebral Aneurysm Association Inc., to give victims ammunition during their toughest times.

All three women have survived cerebral aneurysm operations.

"It's an opportunity to talk to someone else who has experienced what

you have," Caprara said. "If (someone) hasn't gone through the surgery, they just don't know what it's like."

THE NON-PROFIT organization is designed to give victims an opportunity to talk about some of the common emotional traumas involved with aneurysms, such as loss of memory, extreme bouts of depression, speech impairments, vision and hearing losses, lack of motor coordination and personality changes.

"I think if I had a group like this, I could have improved a lot earlier," Trembath said. "We have had a problem, and we can help other people

with the same problem. God gave us life on this earth for a reason, and this must be it."

Trembath and Caprara beat the odds when they survived cerebral aneurysm operations only days apart from each other in May 1980.

Dr. Saeed Farhat, head of neurosurgery at St. Joseph's Hospital in Ypsilanti, compares an aneurysm to a tire that bulges where it's worn out.

Technically, a cerebral aneurysm is an enlargement in the side of a blood vessel in the brain due to weakness in the wall of the vessel, said Farhat, who performed aneurysm surgery on Trembath.

One in 100 people have cerebral aneurysms, but in most cases there is no bleeding, and the person is unaware of the condition, Farhat said.

"If an aneurysm is found for any reason, you have an operation, even if it hasn't started to bleed," Farhat said.

Caprara's aneurysm never ruptured.

"My doctor said I was like a walking time bomb and that I had to have it done," Caprara said.

ONE-THIRD of the people with aneurysms that bleed don't survive and don't even make it to the hospital, Farhat said.

"The people that do survive the initial bleeding have problems that are stroke-like," Farhat said. "So this kind of organization is very helpful."

A good number of patients who have had bleeding have many problems, and the organization brings the problems out in the open for the patient to deal with," he said.

At the meetings, aneurysm victims, and occasionally their friends and family members, take each other's telephone numbers in case they need someone to discuss their problems with between meetings.

"I want to help people, and I want them to know that there's someone there," Trembath said. "A lot of times friends are there when you're healthy, but when you're not, they're not there."

Neither woman outwardly appears to have any side effects from her aneurysm, but both say they had to overcome many hurdles, like speech and memory difficulties, to reach their present state.

Caprara, the mother of seven children, and Trembath, the mother of three, attribute a lot of their recovery to constant support from their husbands.

"There's nothing you can do to prevent cerebral aneurysms," Farhat said. "Frequently patients who have aneurysms have a warning bleeding that causes a headache that's not very severe, and people will wait until they have a severe headache."

"The public should be aware that a person who has a sudden headache should go to the doctor immediately. It could be a warning that the bleeding of the aneurysm started, and if they see a physician it could be found out and a life could be saved."

The initial headache has a sudden impact and shouldn't be confused with the chronic type of headaches or migraines, Farhat said.

Trembath describes her headache as feeling like someone hit her in the back of the head with a bat.

After her surgery, Trembath learned that Della Reese had aneurysm surgery and at one point hadn't been expected to live. Trembath decided she "had to contact" the actress and learn "more about her miraculous recovery." She flew to California, but the two never crossed paths. But when Trembath returned home, Reese called her, and they talked for 45 minutes long distance.

"I was looking for someone who had gone through the same thing. I thought I was the only one in the world, and I was thinking, 'Why me?'"

— Sharon Trembath



TREMBATH AND Caprara met each other in 1980 after their aneurysm operations.

"I was looking for someone who had gone through the same thing," Trembath said. "I thought I was the only one in the world, and I was thinking, 'Why me?'"

Trembath saw an article in a daily Detroit newspaper telling about Lighton's interest in helping others who faced what she had been through. Lighton is married to Dr. Jack Lighton, who is a vascular surgeon at Mt. Clemens General Hospital.

The three women met, and the out-

come was the formation of the Cerebral Aneurysm Association Inc. The organization is local, but the women say they wouldn't be surprised if it mushroomed into a national group.

The organization meets monthly at different locations. In May, the second meeting, the attendance doubled to more than 50.

The women have planned a picnic for the July meeting to give participants an opportunity to meet with each other in a relaxed atmosphere.

For more information on the group, call Dr. John Lighton's office at 463-7000.

"My doctor said I was like a walking time bomb and that I had to have it (aneurysm surgery) done."

— Regina Caprara



Volunteers thanked

Farmington Community Center benefits from gifts of time and talent

By Lorraine McClellan
staff writer

Penny Sage was the honored guest among a gathering of honored guests when the staff of Farmington Community Center said thanks to men and women who give time and talents to

enhance the old mansion-turned-center during the annual spring Volunteer Recognition Luncheon.

Sage does miscellaneous at-home typing for the center plus types and puts together its every-other-month newsletter. That time, plus the time spent as co-chair of the center's silent

and live auction, tallied up to better than 500 hours and put her at the top of the Volunteer Guild's list.

Together with her husband Jeff the couple met their goal of topping last year's proceeds in the auction that is now the center's biggest fund-raiser, and wound up their job with \$8,000 to

go into the center's coffers.

Fund-raising never stops. Before the afternoon of recognition was concluded, Judy Astishin, a volunteer for the center since its onset, announced to the gathering that tickets were now on sale for the annual fall luncheon and fashion show set for September in Sheraton

Oaks.

And while the never-ending staging of benefits is paramount on one hand, the other hand is constantly concerned with day-to-day operations as well as keeping up with the maintenance of a house that was built in 1869.

IN THE WORDS of Betty Paine, executive director for the center, the volunteers have "papered, painted, pasted, planned and prepared through the year to bring the center to its present condition of never more beautiful in the 15 years it has been a center for the community's use."

At the same time she mused about the gracious lifestyle a family once must have enjoyed in the house and grounds in the early part of the century and the staff it must have demanded.

The staff it demands now is a handful of paid employees, a volunteer board of directors and about 250 members of the Volunteer Guild who have given a total of about 7,000 hours in one year's time.

The organized guild is a relatively new addition to the center, headed this year by Gail Perron, who inaugurated the end-of-the-season recognition luncheon.

Admittance to the luncheon was by invitation only, which had to be limited to the top hour-givers due to limited space, a cause for concern to Paine.

"We hope the other will be nice so we can have the luncheon outside, but even then in the event we have to go inside, we are limited to the numbers we can have in the living room. We're going to have to do something about that next year because we don't want to cut off anybody and it doesn't seem right to have a luncheon for center volunteers any other place except the center," she said.

Paine spoke of the volunteers who give a couple of hours a week on a regular basis, doing clerical work, working on the reception desk, or working in Second Edition, the resale shop housed in the building's second floor.

She also spoke of the volunteers who

might work on one special event during the year, or the volunteer who might come to make a one-time donation of time for something that needs to be done in the more-than-100-year-old building.

MARY MCCULLUM, who works as director of Job Placement Center for all four Oakland Community College campuses, is the center's newly installed board of directors' president.

MCCULLUM came into that post while the center was better off financially than it was at any time for any of her predecessors.

Yet, she says, "There is always the need to find more ways and better ways to raise money. Last year we spent \$20,000 for a new roof. Next year we are going to have to finance all new wiring for the house."

She suspects that the board, in cooperation with the volunteers, will be planning something special in the way of celebrating the 15th year of the house and grounds have been used as a community center, before the year is out.

She also suspects the board may look to the possibility of memorial contributions as a source of revenue.

"Our whole concern is taking care of the house so it will be here for another 100 years," she said, speaking for the board.

At one point during the festivities Jeff Sage made the comment, referring to his work on the benefit auction, that he "had never seen such organized efforts."

It was a remark that was to be echoed several times during the afternoon, mostly in reference to Perron's organizational abilities in leading the guild.

For her work she was singled out, with several others, by being given a drawing of the center, drawn and signed by Farmington artist Nancy Davis Mendoff, in thanks from the staff. Other recipients of the original art work were Leon Serfaty, who is leaving the area to take up residency in Florida, and Mary Ferra, who heads up Second Edition.

Proceeds from the 31-hour-long program will support March of Dimes fight against birth defects through medical research, education, and community service projects.



RANDY ROBERT/WALT PHOTOGRAPHY

with her husband Jeff when the couple co-chaired the center's biggest fund-raiser this year, the silent and live auction staged in May.

March of Dimes telethon aired

The second annual March of Dimes telethon will air Saturday, June 30 and Sunday, July 1 on WKBD-TV Channel 50 hosted by Joe Oliver and Amy Makipoon.

Proceeds from the 31-hour-long program will support March of Dimes fight against birth defects through medical research, education, and community service projects.

Penny Sage was "top volunteer" among many volunteers who work through the year for Farmington Community Center in numerous capacities. A good portion of the hours she contributed were given