



Augusta Sisler: Doctors still don't know very much about adhesions.

Bringing hidden scars to light

By KENNETH R. CERINI

Imagine enduring dozens of surgeries, accompanied by myriad infections and incredible pain, and having nowhere to turn. Not only was there nowhere to go if you were an individual suffering from adhesions, but the doctors had no guidance or answers for the cause of your pain and sickness. In 2004, after suffering from adhesions for several years, Augusta Sisler founded the World Adhesion Foundation Inc.

"I never wanted another living soul to endure what I went through," said Sisler, founder and president of the foundation. "The doctors didn't know what to do or where to send me, so I approached Stony Brook University to start a research center, and that's become my ultimate goal."

What are adhesions? The most problematic adhesions can form anywhere in the body due to surgery or injury. Adhesions are internal bands of scar tissue that form between organs, most often in the pelvic area. They are caused by infection, inflammation, endometriosis or as areas heal from surgery. Adhesions may connect organs and tissues that are not normally attached, which can disturb function or cause chronic pain, infertility, bowel obstruction and more.

Does the foundation provide support or is the focus strictly on research? Yes, we provide support as far as raising money to get patients treatment, speaking with them directly about adhesion-related disorders and how they can work with their physicians. We're looking to provide support on a larger scale, but it's a work in progress. Our focus is on finding the cure for adhesions, and to find a drug to help ease the pain. Currently, patients are undergoing surgery to cut the adhesions, but they're nearly always grow back and no one knows why.

Are there precautions doctors can take to avoid the formation of adhesions? There is no guaranteed way to prevent adhesions, but less-invasive surgeries can yield a lower possibility for them to form. In addition, there are several products that can be applied to the surgical area doctors are working on that will reduce the

ability of adhesions to stick to organs. Unfortunately, this is not an accepted part of routine surgery, which is something I am hoping to change.

Why is so little known about adhesions? Doctors don't always advise patients about adhesions because they don't know very much about them. We're looking to improve upon doctor/patient relationships, so that doctors are taught more about adhesions and can advise their patients about them prior to surgery. Unfortunately, because so little is known, patients are suspected as being drug abusers because they take so much pain medication. The start to changing this is in developing a research center.

Is the foundation partnering with doctors and businesses to form the research center? Last year we were fortunate enough to receive a \$10,000 grant from Sen. Ken Lavale, and we're looking to continue to partner with leaders in the community such as general surgeons, businesses, universities, psychiatrists, etc., so that we can work together in finding the cure. The center would be great for the local community as well, as it would provide many new jobs ranging from construction workers to the researcher working late at night toward achieving a Nobel Prize. We're the only nonprofit serving this population. Many of us have suffered vast emotional losses, our savings in addition to our health. We are looking to generate awareness and develop a path toward finding the cure.

Address 105 Laurel Lane
Port Jefferson, NY 11777

Founder Augusta Sisler

Telephone (631) 921-7426

Website www.adhesionsfoundation.org

Founded 2004

Paid staff 0

Annual budget \$10,000

Fundraised budget \$1,000

Program services 98 percent

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Brother and sister act

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Long Island hosted 450 guests at its Presidential Gala, held in September at the Crest Hollow Country Club in Woodbury. The event raised nearly \$300,000 for the Levittown-based mentoring organization.

Little "siblings" took the podium to thank their "big" for their support. "Growing up without a father was hard until you showed up," said a little brother named George, who now towers over his big brother, Tim Cucinro, of Floral Park. "I just can't express how much your kindness and friendship meant to me."

The event honored as Men of the Year Andrew Corrado, senior vice president and market president for Nassau County for Capital One Bank, and James McInerney, chairman and CEO of the Whitmore Group in Garden City. Both men are members of the EBBSLI board of directors and, according to the organization, were instrumental in the event's impressive fundraising tally.

United Way gets a boost for YouthBuild

United Way of Long Island announced it will receive \$300,000 in grant funds from the U.S. Department of Energy as part of a \$1.4 million National Weatherization Innovation Pilot Program.

The Door Park-based organization will use the funds in conjunction with its YouthBuild Long Island program, which helps low-income men and women ages 18-24 learn job skills by building affordable green housing for low- to middle-income residents.

With the grant, United Way of Long Island will pilot a nationally coordinated system for local YouthBuild organizations to weatherize low-income homes in their neighborhoods. The program will demonstrate a model in which the YouthBuild project can transition its weatherization services into fee-for-service divisions that will employ graduates of YouthBuild while generating revenue to train additional residents.

Help in keeping their new house clean

The Luiza family received the donation of a brand-new house in East Setauket, as chronicled on ABC's Extreme Makeover: Home Edition, which aired on Oct. 3. Alure Home Improvements of Plainville led the building project, and now another Long Island company, led by the Luiza family's struggles, has come forward to offer assistance.

Teresa's Family Cleaning of Rocky Point announced that it will donate six months of free

cleaning services to aid the family in its transition to a larger home.

John and Grace Luiza adopted 18 children, seven of them with Down syndrome. After the couple passed away, their adult daughter Kathleen moved back home to take care of her siblings with Down syndrome. However, she was subsequently diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. Adding to the family's problems was the poor condition of their 40-year-old house, which was since razed to make room for the new one.

"That's a busy household over there," Teresa Ward, owner of Teresa's Family Cleaning, said in a statement. "House cleaning is not at the top of their list, and this is one less thing they'll have to worry about."

North Shore does its part for research

North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center, headquartered in Roslyn Heights, announced its participation in two children's mental health research projects in collaboration with Columbia University.

The first, called CHARMS (Columbia Health and Adverse Reactions to Medication), uses computerized interviews to detect possible adverse reactions in children and adolescents who take psychiatric medication. The project was funded by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. North Shore Child and Family participated in CHARMS field trials, and Columbia is analyzing the results to measure the reliability of the test.

The other project relates to the expected 2013 release of the revised version of the American Psychiatric Association's diagnostic manual. Four large field trials focusing on youth will examine the proposed changes, and North Shore Child and Family will serve as a participating site for the trials.

According to a statement by the organization, improving measures of medication side effects and accuracy in diagnosing children with mental health disorders will assure improvements in the assistance for young people struggling with mental illness.

—BERNADETTE STARZEE

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