

Neighborhood rallies to raise money in fight against disease

Friends, family members recall the late Shannon Hudson Terry

By LAURI ZACHRY

Leader Staff

David and Prudence Hudson and about 60 people living in the Plantation neighborhood in northwest Round Rock celebrated the United States' independence from England and the life of Shannon Hudson Terry July 3.

Since July 4 was Shannon Hudson Terry's birthday, her parents and their neighbors thought that weekend was the perfect time to celebrate her life and bring awareness to Chiari disease, which claimed her life May 31.

Chiari disease affects about 1 in 1,000 people of all races, ages and three out of four affected are women, David Hudson said.

See CHIARI, page 2A



Courtesy photo

Prudence Hudson (center) stands beside shades placed in the Plantation neighborhood of northwest Round Rock July 3 during a fundraiser for Chiari disease. During the July 3 fundraiser Hudson, her husband, David, and other neighbors raised \$2,000 to combat Chiari disease.

CHIARI: Is commonly misdiagnosed as migraine or depression

Continued from page 1A

Plantation resident Aaron Grondin and his wife, Sha Embree, organized the July 3 event in which the men in the neighborhood grilled out and the women brought sides and desserts for the picnic of sorts.

"With deep gratitude, we are honored to be given the opportunity to support David and Prudence in their mission to help others and raise awareness," Grondin stated in a news release issued July 1.

The Hudsons neighbors raised \$2,000 in donations at the July 3 event to help conquer Chiari disease.

Along with celebrating the life of Terry with their neighbors, the Hudsons met a couple (whom they did not know previously) whose daughter was also suffering from Chiari.

"The event July 3 was an amazing outpouring of generosity of our neighbors," Prudence Hudson said. "We are so grateful to our neighbors in the Plantation neighborhood for this outpouring of generosity."

Chiari is a neurological disorder where the bottom part of the brain, the cerebellum, descends out of the skull and crowds the

spinal cord, causing intense pain and discomfort, according to Dr. K. Michael Webb, a neurosurgeon and executive medical director for the NeuroTexas Institute at St. David's Healthcare in Austin.

This pressure causes balance and coordination problems, numbness and tingling all over the body or on one of side of the body.

The symptoms are commonly misdiagnosed as migraines and sometimes depression. Common symptoms of Chiari are severe headaches, usually in the back of the head, made worse by straining, coughing, sneezing or bending over.

In addition, symptoms can also include numbness in the hands and feet, balance problems, respiratory problems, nausea, insomnia, sleep apnea and extreme pain in the neck and shoulders, Webb said.

David Hudson said each person diagnosed with Chiari might be suffering from a different combination of symptoms, making the disease difficult for general practitioners and neurologists to diagnose.

If a general practitioner suspects his or her patient has Chiari, he or she will



Terry

order a MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) and then refer the patient to a neurologist, Webb said. The neurologist will then order a Cine MRI scan to specifically look at the flow of spinal fluid, he said.

Webb said he sees about 50 to 60 cases of Chiari a year in Central Texas.

Webb said those suffering from Chiari either manage the symptoms of the disease with anti-inflammatory medications or, if they have brain or spinal cord dysfunction, have the Chiari malformation surgery.

During the surgery, surgeons make an incision from the back of the head to the middle of the neck, take a three-centimeter piece of bone from the back of the neck, and then remove an arch over the spinal canal at the first cervical vertebrae, Webb said.

"We want to restore the

normal flow of spinal fluid and give the brain stem and cerebellum more room," Webb said.

Surgeons then expand the lining of the brain to make space where spinal fluid can flow freely up and down, he said.

Terry had the Chiari decompression surgery four years ago and was elated when her neurologist had finally given her a diagnosis and a treatment for the symptoms she was experiencing, David Hudson said.

However, she began having symptoms of the disease again a couple of years after her surgery and died from complications of managing those symptoms of Chiari.

"I want to help people get the right diagnosis and an awareness that this disease exists and there are treatment options including surgery that is 80 percent successful in treating the symptoms," David Hudson said.

Webb said some of the innovations with conducting the Chiari malformation surgery include using ultrasound to make the surgery less invasive. Through an ultrasound, surgeons can see the amount of spinal

Chiari disease symptoms

- migraine headaches (usually in the back of the head; made worse by straining, coughing, sneezing or bending over)
- feelings of depression
- numbness in hands and feet
- balance problems
- respiratory problems
- nausea
- insomnia
- sleep apnea
- pain in neck and shoulders

Source: Conquerchiari.org

fluid flowing.

"This is a safe surgery that can improve the quality of life of someone suffering from Chiari," Webb said. "We are continuing to work hard to make the surgery even safer.

"We're trying to understand the one underlying problem with Chiari malformation, which appears to be the inability of spinal fluid to flow freely," he said.

Terry graduated from Georgetown High School and from the University of Texas with a bachelor's degree in fashion merchandising.

She is survived by her parents; husband Joe; and daughter, Madison, 16, who attends high school in Carrollton, near Dallas.

"Shannon was a vibrant, loving daughter, sister, mother and wife," Prudence Hudson said.

"She always had a smile on her face and loved people. I couldn't think of a better face for Chiari. Shannon was a shining star in our life and we want her light to continue shining."

Team Infinity has been organized as an official team in honor of Shannon Hudson Terry for the Walk for Chiari, Saturday, Sept. 17 in Plano.

In the future, David Hudson said he wants to set up a foundation in Shannon's name, and raise money to help people who might need financial help in treatment of their Chiari symptoms – or to help with costs of the Chiari malformation surgery.

For more information about Chiari – or to make donations or find out more about the Team Infinity walk team in Plano organized to honor Terry – visit: conquerchiari.org.