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Health Notes

PREVENT A FALL ... Seniors who have taken a bad spill recently but want to maintain their independence may be interested in a new service by **Stanford Hospital, the Menlo Park and Palo Alto fire departments and community physicians.**

The program, called Farewell to Falls, focuses on three key issues: medication review, exercise, and home modification. "Studies show that approximately 50 percent of seniors who fall will experience a second fall, said Rochelle Dicker, a trauma surgeon at Stanford Hospital and Clinics. "Our program is designed to reach out to seniors who have recently fallen and give them the opportunity to reduce their chances of falling again by introducing prevention techniques and mobility exercises." The program consists of two home visits with follow-up phone calls and an annual evaluation visit. During the first visit, an occupational therapist introduces fall prevention strategies, screens for balance and mobility and conducts a medication review with the Stanford Pharmacy Department. A home assessment with recommendations for environmental changes occurs during the second home visit when the senior will be given a Sit and be Fit video to work on balance and strength following an exercise routine. After this visit, the senior will be connected with a phone friend volunteer who will call once a week to answer questions and provide support. One year after the last home visit, the occupational therapist will return to reassess the senior's mobility and measure improvement. The program hopes to provide these services to approximately three seniors a week. For more information about the program, contact **Ellen Corman**, injury prevention and special projects coordinator at 724-9369.

Health Notes is published every second Wednesday of the month. Send items for Health Notes to the Palo Alto Weekly, P.O. Box 1610, Palo Alto, CA 94302, fax to 326-3928 or e-mail jaquino@paweekly.com. The deadline is the previous Thursday at 5 p.m.

Health & Fitness

A monthly section on recreation and health, edited by Jennifer Aquino



Donna and Gil Warren hold a family photo of their four sons. The Warrens have dedicated themselves to promoting organ donation after their youngest son needed a heart transplant and then five years later another son died in a car accident prompting them to donate his tissue to UCSF.

Norbert von der Groeben

THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

Palo Alto
family knows
importance
of organ
donation

by Casey Reivich

Five years ago, Gil and Donna Warren's youngest son Tyler was in need of a new heart. He suffered from congenital heart disease and had already undergone eight life-saving open-heart surgeries. Without a transplant, Tyler would die.

Tyler was put on an organ transplant wait list. It was a tense time for the Palo Alto family. After 101 days of waiting, Tyler got a donor.

Because donor identity is protected, the Warrens only knew that the heart donation was from a 20-year-old Latino American man from Fresno who had been killed in a car accident. Although there is a costly downside — Tyler must take 25-30 pills a day for the rest of his life and is often sick — the Warrens know they are lucky.

Five years later they got a chance to give back when another of their sons tragically died in a car accident.

"You never know. Sometime in your

lifetime you'll know somebody, be related to somebody, or you yourself will need a transplant or a tissue transplant," Gil said.

These experiences have made the Warren family vocal advocates and educators about organ donation. Gil and Donna are lead volunteers at the California Donor Transplant Network. Donor advocates like Donna and Gil Warren lobbied hard for the new donor registry, an online organ and tissue donor registry launched in April by the state of California. Anyone can indicate whether they care to be a donor on the Web site. For the first time, a California donor's wishes are explicit and legally binding.

"There's such a lack of available organs and tissues. It's going to help increase the number. It's going to save a lot of lives and enhance a lot of lives," said Gil.

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CIRCLE OF LIFE 
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That's one reason the Warrens pushed for their son's tissue to be donated after the car accident. At 3 p.m., the day after Thanksgiving, police officers came to the Warren's home to tell them that their 27-year-old son, Jesse, had been killed in a car accident. He was heading home in his Chevrolet Camaro. While exiting at Page Mill Road he spun out of control and crashed into a light pole.

Gil and Donna immediately wanted to see Jesse. The police took them to the coroner's office in San Jose. As soon as they saw their son they wanted him to be an organ donor.

Jesse had the pink organ donor sticker on the back of his driver's license, but the coroner thought the time had elapsed to take action. Donna and Gil Warren knew better.

The Warrens knew it was too late for Jesse's vital organs — an individual has to be on mechanical support to donate — but his tissue, eyes, ligaments, and veins were still usable.

Donna insisted the coroner call the University of San Francisco tissue bank.

"They talked to me and told me what they would like and what we could give. They had one and a half hours left of the day to be able to recover everything we gave," Donna said.

Doctors from the USCF tissue bank rushed down to the coroner's office in San Jose.

"They treat the body with great respect. They honor that person as a human being so as the family makes decisions after the passing of their loved ones they're able to have the proper ceremony to honor that person," said Gil.

Unfortunately, many families in the face of such tragedy would not know what to do. And often, the pink dot is an ineffective guide. It is not explicit, it can even fall off, and a family can ultimately override it.

The Warrens, however, because of Tyler's experience, knew Jesse would want to donate his organs.

"Jesse and Tyler were alone together when we got the phone call that they had a heart for Tyler. So

it was almost like there was a sense for us that there was this connection. We knew that Jesse truly felt that if that (donation) was a possibility he would have wanted it," said Donna.

"Kind of like completing the circle of life," Gil added.

On Dec. 3, 2004, more than 700 people gathered at Unity Palo Alto Community Church to share memories about Jesse Warren. Everyone in the family agreed that Jesse would not want a funeral. He would want a celebration.

"There were so many people who got up there and told stories about Jesse that we didn't even know. It was such an amazing experience for us," Donna remembered.

When Donna and Gil talked about Jesse, the heaviness of the past year seemed to lift temporarily. They both lit up when speaking about him.

"He treated people like gold. He affected so many people," Donna said. ■

To register on *Donate Life California*, visit www.donatelifecalifornia.org/.

**Conquering chronic pain
in children**

Books offer advice on how to care for psychological and physical effects of a persistent condition

by **Stanford Health Library**

Children who suffer from pain that just won't go away are robbed of their childhood. They hurt. They worry too much and are afraid. Chronic pain impacts school attendance and grades, participation in fun activities and relationships with friends and family.

The rest of the family suffers too—psychologically, socially and emotionally. Parents and children alike feel out of control and helpless. Sometimes a definitive diagnosis is impossible to find, adding to the frustration. Parents feel guilty about not being able to help their child feel better.

Chronic pain in childhood is not a rare occurrence. According to the American Pain Society, one in five children and adolescents in the United States suffer from debilitating pain. The causes of children's pain are many, including headaches, arthritis, fibromyalgia, irritable bowel syndrome, and more.

Pain in children is not well understood. Until the late 1980s, it was commonly believed in the medical community that children felt pain differently than adults. It was considered bad medicine to give children strong painkillers, no matter how much they

suffered. Today, the medical world recognizes pain in children, but many practitioners are unprepared to treat it effectively. Many children continue to be under treated for their pain.

Parents of children in pain will find hope in a new book, *Conquering Your Child's Chronic Pain: A Pediatrician's Guide for Reclaiming a Normal Childhood*, by Lonnie K. Zeltzer, M.D., and Christina Blackett Schlank. Dr. Zeltzer, director of the Pediatric Pain Program at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital, asserts, "It is never too late to treat pain in children, no matter how long it has lasted." She believes that children's pain is real and deserves attention.

The book is written to help people understand the complex nature of pain, as well as the approaches to diagnosis and treatment. It first defines pain, then goes on to compare acute versus chronic pain. The biology and psychology of chronic pain are examined. In addition, the various conditions that are associated with chronic pain are discussed, as are the factors that contribute to it.

"Conquering Your Child's Chronic Pain," acknowledges that there is no magic bullet for treating chronic pain,

but there are a wide variety of options to consider. Different types of pain and individual people require treatment designed specifically for their unique situation. The book offers information about a wide range of treatment options available to children, from medication to alternative methods such as hypnotherapy, yoga, acupuncture and biofeedback. The benefits of individual and family counseling are also presented. Dr. Zeltzer even provides specific breathing, relaxation and visualization exercises designed to help children cope with chronic pain.

A chapter answers parents' frequently asked questions and a glossary defines pain terminology. Appendices identify pediatric and gastrointestinal pain programs worldwide. One of the programs mentioned is at Louise Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford (<http://pedsanesthesia.stanford.edu/>).

"Conquering Your Child's Chronic Pain" is available for borrowing from the Stanford Health Library. The Health Library also has a number of other materials to help parents help their children with chronic pain. The library's web site (<http://healthlibrary.stanford.edu>) has links to information on coping with chronic pain and its associated conditions.

For more information or assistance, come into one of the Stanford Health Library branches, at the Stanford Shopping Center near Bloomingdale's; on the third floor of Stanford Hospital or on the main level of Stanford's new Cancer Center; or call (650) 725-8400.

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