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FROM ABROAD

Metal Comb the Best Weapon Against Head Lice **California company copes with families homes.**

- Tomi Hinkkanen

Los Angeles Californians Hilary Scofield and Michelle Aloisio run a company called The Hair Angels. They are not hairdressers, but in fact offer the rather delicate service of disposing of head lice in human hair.

Michelle Aloisio ended up in the industry after her daughter came home from kindergarten itching furiously. "I took her to several places, but everyone said it was just dandruff." Michelle said.

"Finally, my friend checked my daughter's head and she confirmed that my daughter and I both had head lice. I fell to my knees and began to cry, because I had no idea what to do." she admitted.

Hilary had a similar experience when her entire family was diagnosed with lice. She explored a huge bag of tricks including mayonnaise, chemical treatments, and vinegar but none of these approaches worked. They both finally turned to expert help for relief from the problem.

PHOTO

Hilary Scofield and Michelle Aloisio arrive in their official car to remove head lice from your home. (caption)

From her ordeal, Michelle got the idea to set up her own business. She asked her friend Hilary Scofield to partner with her, and they sought advice from another woman in the lice removal industry, Katie Shepherd. Shepherd has developed a lice removal technique which bears her name, "The Shepherd Method". This is the method used by The Hair Angels.

A typical client is a school-age child's mother. "The mother always calls us panicked. She has just noticed that her child has lice," Aloisio said.

The Hair Angels send a technician to the customer's home. First she examines the patient and the other family members to determine who has been infected and who requires treatment.

Then begins the treatment. Lice removal is usually performed outdoors. "We use a metal lice comb. We comb continually until the comb cannot remove anything else. Then we divide the hair into four sections and examine each section in paper fine layers, making sure no nits are left," Aloisio explains.

If even one bug or nit is left on the head, the infection begins all over again. Lice can easily be spread and often they have to deal with the whole family. A typical patient has had lice for at least two weeks.

"The worst case was a 14-year-old girl who had lice for over a year. When I met her outside, I began to comb her hair and the bugs were falling out onto the ground. The girl's mother did not want to accept this, and she simply shut her eyes," remembers Michelle.

People are ashamed to admit that they have lice, even though it has nothing to do with whether a person is clean or not.

"Initially, each call was hysterical. Recently, lice has become a common problem, and people are starting to take this issue more calmly," Hilary explains

And the more people scratch their head, the more often the cash machine rings. Each client's treatment takes an average of one and a half hours and costs \$ 135 (90 euros).

The Hair Angels now has 11 employees in California and Arizona, and more are recruited continuously. "We have been scratching our heads for three years now," smiles Michelle Aloisio.

Inset:

Head lice are wingless insects

- *Head lice are a couple of millimeters in size*
- *They live for one month, and lay one hundred eggs during their lifetime. They hatch in 7-10 days. At the same time they become sexually mature.*
- *They live on the human head, from which they suck blood. Without food, they usually die within a day.*
- *Lice is mainly transmitted from head to head, human contact*
- *Lice can not be obtained, for example from pets or contaminated furniture.*

- *Chemical shampoos can be used to kill the adult lice, but not their eggs.*
- *The surest way to eliminate lice is a diligent, manual removal process.*