



BUSINESS

ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT

The Hair Angels: Nit-Picking on Lice

By **PETER DAY**
The Outlook

Hilary Scofield is the first to admit it: Her family has been hit by head lice.

Years ago she discovered lice in her children's hair, so she did what other moms have secretly done for eons: She bought an over-the-counter shampoo promising to eradicate the infestation of the stubborn, stigma-laden pest. But three months later, the last little louse was still clinging to her child's scalp.

"We had a really difficult time getting rid of it," Scofield said.

Five years later Scofield was visiting Michelle Aloisio, the wife of her husband's co-worker, when they realized Aloisio's children also

had battled head lice. They knew they weren't alone and other moms were struggling with the same, often embarrassing situation.

"Her husband thought it might be a great side business. So we decided to go ahead and see."

Scofield and Aloisio researched the issue and discovered that human lice infestations, also known as pediculosis, have been on the rise for the past 45 years. Not only were the new business partners not alone, but literally hundreds of millions of parents and their children around the world have waged battle against the pesky critters.

The two flew to Florida for training by Katie Shepherd, a foremost authority on head lice treatment. After a week, they were certi-

fied and officially launched their business, The Hair Angels.

Today, nearly four years after starting the Pasadena-based company, business is booming. When they first opened, the pair might make one or two house calls a day. Now their team of 12 Hair Angels employees is making up to a dozen house visits per day.

"It's almost an epidemic. It's out of control. It's everywhere," said Scofield.

The Hair Angels uses the Shepherd Method, which entails going over a person's hair, strand-by-strand, in a specific fashion.

"We spend probably double the amount of time. It's a very systematic method," Scofield added. "We remove almost every single nit [louse egg] we can find. We're the only company in Southern California that does it that way."

In fact, their \$90-per-hour treatment methods are dramatically more effective than conventional treatments that utilize ineffective shampoos and non-systematic hunting for the elusive insects.

"I never thought when I was a girl, when I'd walk into a room that I'd say that lice was the best thing that every happened to me," said Aloisio.

But for Aloisio and Scofield, parasites are more than just business, the team is committed to educating parents, schools and medical professionals and about debunking myths.

"We're really out there spreading the word and educating people about lice," Aloisio said. "Lice did not start with the person we are treating, they got it from someone else, it's not about a certain socio-economic level or about poor people, it's just a fact of life for elementary school families. Education is

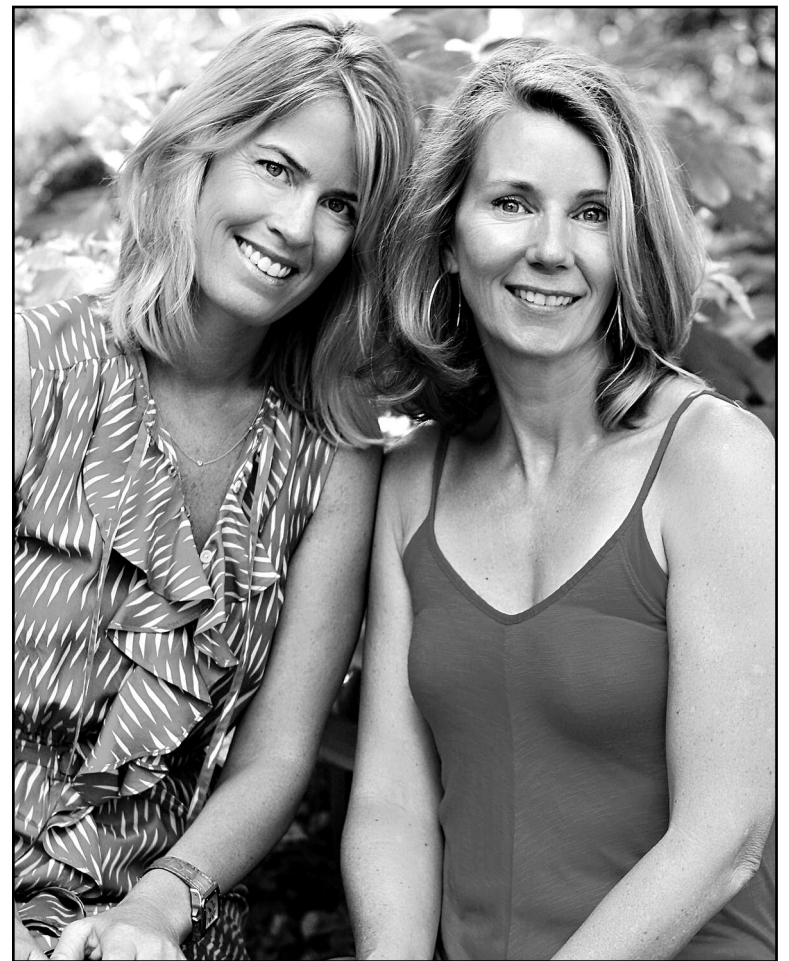


Photo courtesy Colby Evans Photography
Michelle Aloisio and Hilary Scofield are co-owners of The Hair Angels, a Pasadena-based lice removal company popular with parents.

really important. We want to break down the stigma."

Here are some of the important facts about lice courtesy of The Hair Angels:

- Lice can't jump or fly.
- Having head lice is not a symptom of dirty hair; lice actually prefer clean hair.
- Lice do not discriminate: an infestation can happen to anyone.
- Generally lice cannot survive off of your head for more than 24 hours.

• Lice do not want to live in your house, they want to live on your head. Nits (lice eggs) do not fall off onto upholstery or bedding. They are cemented to the hair shaft with a "glue." Once a nit is removed, it cannot reattach to a human head, nor can it hatch.

• Head lice cannot live on your pet.

• You have a less than 4% chance of contracting lice from sharing hats or from resting your head on the back of a seat at the movie theatre.

"This business really hit home," said Scofield. "No. 1, we get to help people. They really appreciate the help we provide and the information we give them."

Parents shouldn't panic after discovering their child has lice. It's important to realize that anyone can get lice and that it's nothing to be embarrassed about.

"The stigma is lifting. Everybody gets it," Scofield said. "It doesn't have anything to do with hygiene or economics or whatever."

The Hair Angels clients get more than a home visit from an expert in head-lice treatments. They get a support system that will answer questions and help them along the way.

"We really do develop a good relationship with the parents. We get calls at one in the morning. They can call us at any time."

The Hair Angels may have started in Pasadena, but the business now serves Los Angeles and Orange counties and the South Bay area. For more information on The Hair Angels, call (626) 577-4247 or (877) 543-8881, or visit the website at www.thehairangels.com.



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