BFRBS: Advice for Significant Others
Fred Penzel, PhD
Secretary, TLC Scientific Advisory Board
Executive Director, Western Suffolk Psychological Services

There’s a saying out there, “The only thing worse than having trich (or for that matter, any other body-focused repetitive behavior) is having it alone.” As it turns out, this may not be true in all cases. Having a significant other (SO) for support and encouragement can certainly be an advantage to people. No one would disagree. In the ideal world, everyone would have someone who could provide those things. In this same ideal world, everyone would understand problems of this type, and what it takes to recover from them. Unfortunately, not everyone understands BFRBs, and many sufferers are in relationships with people who not only don’t get it, but don’t get that they don’t get it. The behaviors and attitudes of these SOs create obstacles to their partner’s recovery.

BFRBS are stubborn problems with many different inputs that must all be addressed in a comprehensive way. Finding recovery takes time, hard work, motivation, and a lot of persistence, even under the best of circumstances. Most people have never heard words like BFRBS, trichotillomania or skin picking disorder. And, many of those that HAVE heard these terms still view them as some kind of “bad habit.” When significant others find themselves face-to-face with BFRBs, they now suddenly have to cope with an issue they know little or nothing about. This can lead to all kinds of difficulties. It is important to be aware of these potential problems and their possible solutions if they are to be remedied. Failure to recognize or fix them may cause relationship damage, and possibly breakups. As with many things, education is the key.

How One Phone Call Changed My Life
and $15 Changed 3 Others
Marika Smolensky, BM, MBA
Nevada City, CA

When I was 13, over 30 years ago, I started pulling out my hair. Most people told me to “just stop pulling my hair,” which led to so much shame for having this disorder.

In reflection, I ask myself, “What came first? The chicken or the egg?” Did I have a genetic predisposition to this disorder (yes, I have a distant relative that has it, but not my twin brother)? Or, did the trauma I went through growing up with perfectionist, accomplishment-oriented parents that didn’t allow for the expression of emotions, or listen to their children’s own “voice” provide an environmental climate which facilitated my predisposition? I think it was a little of everything in my particular case.

My parents had a very brutal divorce, and were in a custody battle since I was a baby. In the middle of the 6th grade, my mother decided to “disappear” with her children, and change our identities to avoid custody with my father. I didn’t see my father again for 10 years. My siblings and I grew up lying and hiding so we wouldn’t be discovered; we couldn’t invite friends over, let alone have any; we weren’t allowed to go to any social events at school, like dances or football games.

Not telling people about Trich was easy, since I never shared anything with anyone anyway. I went to so many schools that I stopped learning the street names of where we lived. To this day, I have no “sense of direction.” Thank God for GPS! Eventually, I rebelled and went to live with my sister in Santa Cruz, at my mother’s request. By the time I was 15, I was living on my own in a shed, hitchhiking to the “Alternative Education” program at Soquel High School. My goal was to get out of high school and get a job as fast as possible, so I graduated at 16. I felt slow, because my twin brother graduated at 15.

Continued on page 10

Inside this issue:
- Personal Stories
- New Online
- Awareness Week Update
- Directors’ Reports
and more...

Continued on page 12
InTouch

The Trichotillomania Learning Center’s mission is to end the suffering caused by hair pulling disorder, skin picking disorder, and related body-focused repetitive behaviors. We envision a world where:

- Body-focused Repetitive Behaviors (BFRBs) are diagnosed quickly.
- BFRBs are not a source of shame.
- Knowledgeable treatment is available to all people with these disorders.
- Treatments are more effective and eventually cures are found.
- Information and emotional support are available to people of all ages and their families.

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info@trich.org
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Text deadline next issue: December 7, 2012.
The information in this newsletter is not intended to provide treatment for Trichotillomania or Skin Picking. Appropriate treatment and advice should be obtained directly from a qualified and experienced doctor and/or mental health professional. The opinions expressed are those of the individual authors.

From the Editor
Leslie Lee

As we began compiling the stories for this issue of InTouch, we were surprised to see that the theme of the year, "Make Some Noise," had gained some real momentum. In the past year, we have seen more trichsters and picksters taking an active role in educating the public about these disorders.

In fact, so much has happened in this past year, in terms of media exposure and awareness particularly, we could fill two or three newsletters with stories about the many people, young and old, publicly and privately, who have made a difference for this community...and in doing so, for themselves. We’ve shared a few of these triumphs in this newsletter, and more online. I hope reading them fills you with inspiration!

In looking forward to 2013, I hope everyone will start thinking about the 20th Annual Conference, coming next April to New Jersey. Check the website, as we are continually updating conference information, and are, at this moment, accepting proposals for workshops and classes. We are also searching for a Silent Auction Coordinator to help with that aspect of the conference. For conference veteran attendees, if you have any suggestions for topics or group events, I’d love to hear them. Please send them my way!

Of the most recent developments here at TLC, I am most excited about the hiring of our new Program Assistant: Meet Rita Chaffin on the next page! Rita will work closely with me on all TLC Programs, including events, awareness week, and outreach to patients and professionals. Some of you may have already met Rita by way of emails and online support groups!

One of the new projects Rita and I will work on is the development of a national volunteer network. We would love to develop a source for people looking to expand tools within their community: both in-person and online!

And, as always, we are continuously accepting submissions of personal stories, case studies, and other articles to include in this newsletter. Submissions can be short, haiku-length poems or longer, 2500-word essays, and should be sent to leslie@trich.org.

With love,
Leslie
TLC Webinar Nov. 7

Acceptance-Enhanced Behavior Therapy for TTM:
A New Treatment
Dr. Douglas W. Woods, PhD,
Associate Dean of Graduate School
Professor of Psychology
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
TLC Scientific Advisory Board Member
Moderated by Christina Pearson, Founding Director, TLC

In this one-hour interactive webinar, Dr. Woods will describe a new treatment for trichotillomania called “Acceptance-Enhanced Behavior Therapy for Trichotillomania.” Dr. Woods will describe the underlying theories of this method and how it interacts with BFRBs. He will also give an update on a study of the intervention, which is the largest NIH-funded treatment study ever conducted on adults with TTM.

TLC-SAB Authors New Guidebook:
Suggested Recommendations Regarding Medical Assessment of Trichophagia (Hair Ingestion)

TLC’s Scientific Advisory Board Members created a simple guidebook for families and physicians on advice, symptoms, and recommended assessments for trichobezoars. Bezoars, or hairballs, are formed by the ingestion of hair.

While every patient who pulls hair does not swallow it, 5%-20% of those who pull also eat the hair. This can result in an intestinal blockage that can be extremely serious, even life-threatening. For this reason, TLC-SAB members have examined the literature and studied the experiences of expert clinicians in order to develop the recommendations in this guidebook.

Download here: http://tinyurl.com/8fdapdy
Or contact TLC to request a copy: info@trich.org

Meet TLC’s New Program Assistant!

TLC is thrilled to introduce our new staff member, Rita Chaffin. As Program Assistant, Rita will provide much-needed support in event management, social media and volunteer coordination.

Rita came to us via a job announcement posted on Craigslist. Her first experience with TLC was her interview. Once offered the position, she attended a couple of workshops at the 21st annual TLC retreat in September, 2012. “It was really wonderful to see what a loving, supportive environment the retreat offers. I met so many amazing people there. I am very honored to be involved with an organization that makes a real difference in people’s lives.”

Rita has lived on the California coast her entire life, first in Long Beach, then Santa Barbara, settling in Santa Cruz 20 years ago. She has previous non-profit experience as the Member Services Director for the Santa Barbara YMCA. After that she worked in high tech for a number of years. She is glad to be back in the non-profit sector.

Rita is an avid kayaker who has had many magical experiences with marine wildlife while kayaking in the Monterey Bay. She also enjoys growing flowers, herbs and vegetables in her back yard, and going to hear live music. She has been a lifelong volunteer, mostly with organizations that protect the health of the ocean. She is currently a volunteer docent at the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Exploration Center. In the summer she spends weekends as a naturalist in a kayak in Elkhorn Slough, a National Estuarine Research Reserve in Monterey Bay, CA, interpreting wildlife to visitors.

The rest of the staff are delighted that Rita has joined the team. Her previous experience will enable staff to expand projects and programs that have previously been hindered by lack of time. Welcome, Rita!
I remember when I went to my first TLC retreat 13 years ago. I was 21 years old and was in the midst of a university degree that was costing me almost as much hair as it was money. It was, to put it mildly, a difficult time for me. I’d been a puller since I was seven, but the years of not-so-hidden bald spots, 45 minute bedtime routines and bare eyelids hadn’t made the increased pulling at university any easier. They also hadn’t brought me any closer to understanding why I was pulling, much less what to do about it. I wanted a solution to my hair pulling more than almost anything else in the world.

I didn’t get a solution at that retreat, but I did get some very comforting advice from beloved Christina Pearson. She said, “You can definitely get over trich, but you’ll have to completely change your life.” At the time, I didn’t quite understand what she meant by “completely change your life.” Would I have to start therapy? Give up cookies? I wasn’t sure, so I started with therapy. (I loved cookies WAY too much.) Unfortunately, the therapy didn’t help my pulling any more than the band-aids, the nail polish, the medications or any of the other things I had so desperately tried in the past.

My first “big break” actually came as I was taking a rather intense acting class. The teacher was some big shot from New York and touted that his method was by far the best. That method being that you would stand across from another student and repeat the same phrase over and over again until you began to get in touch with what you were really feeling. I was terrible at it. “Stop acting!” the teacher would shout, “I only want to see real emotions!” This ‘only showing our real feelings’ was often helped by the instructor yelling, freaking out, threatening us and/or putting us down.

Many of the students (myself included) would leave each class more visibly shaken than the last, not entirely sure what was wrong. Then, after a particularly jarring class, I found myself hopping mad. I thought, “How dare my teacher treat his class this way!” So I ranted to my boyfriend. I complained to my parents. I griped and grumbled all evening and then, right before I went to sleep, as I was thinking of creative ways to get back at my acting teacher, two thoughts hit me. One: That I almost NEVER got angry and two: I hadn’t pulled or picked a thing all night! Not even when I was getting ready for bed. I couldn’t believe it. I didn’t pull when I got angry!

I was so thrilled to discover this that I would try to make myself angry whenever possible, just so I wouldn’t pull. Favorite TV show a rerun? The injustice! Stubbed my toe? The horror! I quickly learned, however, that it wasn’t so much the anger that was keeping me from pulling, it was the fact that I wasn’t pushing down my feelings.

Sad to say, screaming at the TV wouldn’t guarantee me a pull-free evening. Not only that, but not pushing down my feelings was a much harder task than just trying to get upset about something. You see, I didn’t really know when I was pushing down anger, or any feeling for that matter. It’s not like I would be doing something and say, “Gee, I don’t like this feeling, I think I’ll just pull my hair out until it goes away.” Nuh-uh, that NEVER happened. What would happen instead is that I would suddenly find myself pulling out hair unconsciously, or it would suddenly seem like pulling was the most enjoyable thing to do—EVER. It was just like a craving. (Sound familiar to anyone?) I didn’t know what I was feeling, I only knew how deliciously fun it would be to pull out those hairs. “All right then” I thought, “I’ll just WORK BACKWARDS.” And here, I was finally on to something.

From then on, whenever I noticed an urge to pull (or several freshly plucked eyelashes between my fingers, whichever came first) I would stop myself and say, “Hey, you’re obviously having a feeling or thought that you’re not comfortable with. Let’s see what it is.” Then, I would immediately think of what it was that I had just been thinking and cycle through all of...
the possible thoughts and feelings that I might actually be feeling or thinking instead. Was I really sad? angry? outraged? disgusted? repulsed? disappointed? happy? As I focused on each possible thought or feeling, I would tell myself that it was OK to have that thought or feeling. I knew when I’d found the right one because as soon as I told myself that it was OK to think or feel that, my urge to pull went away almost immediately. I had found my holy grail of non-pulling!

This technique didn’t happen overnight. It took years of me getting all Sherlock Holmes on my pulling habits. It also involved a steady stream of supportive and knowledgeable people I could talk to. Especially since, the vast majority of the time, I wasn’t able to figure out what I was feeling by myself and had to wait until I could talk to a parent or therapist or friend to get some help. (Now the therapy came in handy!) These people were invaluable in helping me. Only by using them as supportive sounding boards was I able to teach myself to find and then feel thoughts and feelings that I had never been able to in the past. Sometimes, especially at first, the feelings were too distressing to figure out at the time and I ended up pulling, even when I had someone to talk with. It wasn’t until a little while later that I was able to look back and say, "Ah, that’s why I was pulling!" The good news was that each time I uncovered a certain kind of thought or feeling it got easier to find. Eventually, I didn’t pull anymore when I had that particular thought or feeling. Instead, I just thought and felt!

Now, I’m not going to lie to you. I’m not 100% pull free- yet. Compared to my hardest times I’m about 96% pull free. I still sometimes pull out the odd eyelash or head/leg hair and quite a bit of pubic hair too, but I still think that’s pretty awesome. I can wear all the mascara I want and I never have to worry that my willpower will crumble and I’ll end up with a big bald spot, namely because I’m not working with willpower at all.

I also got something more frustrating and frightening and fantastically better than my long-lost follicular friends. I got my feelings back. Well, a lot of them anyway. I’m still working on it, believe you me! Finding my feelings is still hard and frustrating at times. But now that I’ve finally gotten the hang of it, I’ve realized something even better- that I haven’t just gotten my feelings back, I’ve gotten myself back, maybe even for the first time.

Now I finally understand what Christina Pearson meant. You don’t actually have to try to change your life to stop pulling out your hair, you just go in search of yourself, and when you find yourself, the life changes happen automatically, and so does the hair. Well, that’s what happened to me, anyway. I know that everyone’s path is different. Whatever your path is, I wish you much love and support and speed in your journey. And, if you want, I wish you cookies, too. Good luck fellow trichsters!

Acceptance
P. Hersey

If we ever meet perchance the first thing I would do would be look you in the eye

Knowing that you know that I know that words without words indeed do through spaces fly,

And they are far more intimate than the language of lovers so entwined conjoined,

Or of friends engrossed in endless caring talk, surmounting spaces by words purloined,

And know that I know that you know without need of words bespoke or hasty reply

That it would suffice then make replete to but look into the pupil of your eye.

The second thing that I would do that you would know from wordless words unspoken,

From spasmatic fits of uncontrolled impulse gone awry that leave you broken,

Ripped and plucked by cries of shame not there insidious, hideous, piteous,

Would be to stretch my hand extended to part the strands and waves so precious

To feel the patches carefully hidden beneath, left bare, smooth and thinned,

And the shaming pain uncovered by my hand, it’s there where my kiss would gently land.
The Guide to Compassionate Assertiveness
Sherrie M. Vavrichek LCSW-C
$17.95

The Guide to Compassionate Assertiveness utilizes the Buddhist philosophies of compassion and non-harm as well as cognitive behavioral therapy. While traditional approaches to assertiveness training can seem inconsiderate and confrontational to those accustomed to taking the feelings of others into consideration, compassionate assertiveness helps readers express their feelings and needs while remaining considerate of others.

Trichotillomania, Skin Picking & Other BFRBs
Authors: Jon Grant, MD, JD, MPH, Dan Stein, MD, PhD, Douglas Woods, PhD, Nancy J. Keuthen, PhD
$54.00

Trichotillomania, Skin Picking, and Other Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors provides clinicians, researchers, family members, and individuals who have these disorders with the cutting-edge, comprehensive resource they need to understand and address the problem. Coverage is detailed enough for the clinician, yet written in an accessible style to benefit patients and their families. Separate sections for adults and children with these disorders reflect the distinct challenges of treating each group. In addition to providing the most current, evidence-based assessment and treatment strategies, the authors emphasize the personal and social consequences patients face and make a persuasive case for more research, heightened physician awareness, and greater professional empathy in battling this often debilitating disorder.

Bendable Snake Jewelry
The bendable snake bracelet and necklace (sold seperately) bend into any shape for endless looks. A great fiddle that is not a toy! Get ideas on the various ways to style this bendable, flexible jewelry on youtube, search bendable snake jewelry videos. Price range: $17.00-$22.00

TLC Hats
$15.00
Back by popular demand!
For Adults: This popular cap is pigment-dyed and garment-washed to achieve a ‘lived-in’ look and feel. 100% garment-washed cotton twill with self-fabric closure with buckle. Slightly brushed for additional softness and comfort. Features TLC Logo on front, and “www.trich.org” over the adjustable strap, on the reverse. Available in the following colors: denim blue, green, stone, and dandelion. For kids we offer purple, orange or blue.

Moppies Pencil Pouches
Velvety soft 10” bodies with plush head, plastic zipper. Choose from a bear, frog, duck or elephant. Great for carrying fiddles to and from school.

Bristle Pencil Topper
Assorted colors include blue, orange, pink, purple, yellow and green. Squishy and stretchy!

Creepy Pencil Grips
Assortment contains caterpillar, bumble bee and spider in green, brown, pink and blue. Feels soft and squishy!

Face-It Pencil Grips
Soft, squishy grips make writing more comfortable. Assortment contains green, blue, red and purple.
TLC Conference · April 19-21, 2013 · Elizabeth, NJ

Recognize the need to support awareness and outreach for trichotillomania and skin picking?

Want to expose your brand to over 30,000 web visitors per month?

Compelled to participate in an event that many refer to as life-changing?

The TLC Annual Conference offers a unique opportunity to reach a specific demographic while supporting the only event of its kind in the world. With a comprehensive schedule of seminars by leading experts in this field, the Annual Conference is a prestigious event that provides education and inspiration to hundreds of sufferers of all ages, their families, researchers and treatment professionals. The list below includes just a few ways businesses and individuals can support this life-changing event.


Download a complete program prospectus detailing all opportunities: www.trich.org or call 831-457-1004

Transit Advertising Sponsor: $5,000 (3 available)
Raise awareness of the conference and TLC services throughout the Greater-New York region. This sponsorship supports advertising on Public Transportation, including city buses and subways. Supporters receive these additional benefits:

• Logo placement on transit advertising for 45 days
• Half-page advertisement in National Conference Catalog, mailed to 15,000+ nationwide
• Half-page advertisement in Conference Program Guide
• One complimentary registration to the conference

Print Advertising Opportunities
TLC takes great pride in offering its members reliable and trustworthy information. As a result, we only offer advertising opportunities to our members, service providers and businesses. Advertising in TLC Conference materials is an effective way to get the word out about your products and services.

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Reserve by Dec. 1

| Full page: $400 |
| 1/2 page: $250 |
| 1/4 page: $150 |
| 1/8 page: $50 |

Reserve by Feb. 1

Sponsorship reservations should be made by December 1 to guarantee inclusion in the National Conference Catalog.

Scholarship Program
Make a difference with your tax-deductible donation to TLC’s Scholarship Program! 100% of each scholarship fund donation goes toward reducing the cost of registration for children and adults who would otherwise not be able to attend this life-changing event. Your support of this program DIRECTLY benefits those affected by BFRBs. Donate online: www.trich.org or contact the office for more information.

Opportunities for Exposure:

TLC’s website receives an average of 20,000 UNIQUE visits per month, and the Conference event pages are ranked third in “most visited pages” during the conference promotional season, December - May.

TLC has 13,952 subscribers to our email newsletter.

TLC currently has over 4,000 Facebook Fans and this number is growing every day. Each TLC-sponsored link averages an impression rate of 1,700 users. We have an average weekly user rate of 1,500 fans. Plus, TLC is launching fall and winter campaigns to increase the number of our supporters.

TLC’s quarterly newsletter, InTouch, is mailed to 2,000+ nationwide.

In the past three years, our Conference Attendance has DOUBLED previous attendance averages. We expect at least 500 attendees in New Jersey.

Recent advances in overall awareness of trichotillomania has resulted in a 30% increase in web traffic.

TLC has a reputation for making a big difference on a small budget. Your support of this program will enable TLC’s life-changing resources to reach exponentially more people who feel alone, ashamed, and helpless.

For more information contact Leslie Lee 831-457-1004 or leslie@trich.org
2012 Awareness Week: Making NOISE!

TLC Members are getting loud and proud! From articles in the New York Times and abcnews.com to the 6th consecutive Massachusetts State Proclamation declaring Awareness Week as Oct. 1-7, this year you introduced the words trichotillomania and skin picking into the vocabularies of millions of people. Here are just a few of the inspiring stories from our 2012 Noisemakers. Keep up the good work, everyone!

TLC Members Making Noise:

- **Felicia Fignar** set a fundraising goal of $500, promising to shave her head in support of her daughter, Livvy, if she succeeded. Here’s a picture of Felica and Livvy ...she made her goal and then some!

- **Emily Simmons** shared her struggle with hair pulling on the MTV program, True Life, which aired the last day of Awareness week! Watch her episode here: http://tinyurl.com/truelifetrich

- For the 6th consecutive year, **Jim McCarthy** has secured a proclamation from Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick declaring October 1st - 7th, 2012, as Trichotillomania Awareness Week. Read the full proclamation on our blog at trich.org.

- **Nicole Santomorena** was featured in an ABCNews.com story about trichotillomania and the upcoming DSM-changes.

- **Jessica Oram** shared her journey to recovery from trich on Fishbowl Radio, based in Arlington, TX. Listen to the podcast here: http://tinyurl.com/jesoram

- **Southern CA HEART Support Group** (photo below)trekked for trich and raised over $900.00! Members also distributed brochures to salons and raised awareness with bystanders along their trek through Long Beach, CA!

Jenni Rudd Runs for Trich Awareness: Moline, IL

Inspired by the 2012 TLC Conference theme "make some noise!," I decided I wanted to "make some noise" of my own. The first person I had to convince it was the right thing to do was my daughter, Lily. Lily has had Trich since about 2nd grade. She wasn’t sure that she wanted me to do or say anything about Trich. She had the “Just don’t talk about it - I’m too embarrassed” attitude. Happily, she eventually came around, with the condition that she didn’t want her picture or name used. Fair enough. Now what?

Once Lily got on board, the next question was, “How?” I decided to incorporate my noise-making into something I already do - running! I already planned to run the Quad Cities Half Marathon, so I decided to do that as a means to raise awareness of trich and TLC. Having a cause to run for gave me extra motivation in my training. It also gave me what I think was very important - a deadline. Having a deadline kept me pushing forward. I guess it’s like being in school and having the final exam creeping closer and closer. You would be amazed at what you can do when you know it’s right around the corner.

I was already involved in a local non-profit called LIVE UNCOMMON (liveuncommon.org). They made my jersey for the race and were a tremendous support. Live Uncommon (LU) really was a catalyst for my story because people recognize the LU name and would ask, “What’s TLC?” When asked that by a complete stranger, I would often get the, "Why don’t you just tell her to stop," or "Make her wear a wig," or "Make her go out without her headband," type of comments. While statements like these may make you want to go on the defensive, you really need to realize what they are and where they come from-- a lack of knowledge and understanding about trich. Take those opportunities to educate, raise awareness and "make some noise!!"

I was also lucky enough to have our local paper do a story on me and my run for trich. When the article came out, I had neighbors and even strangers approach me with their own trich stories or stories about someone they know that has it. My daughter’s therapist said that even some of her patients came out about it after seeing the article. Ultimately I have received a lot of positive support and feedback. Although some people seem a bit uncomfortable about it, we have to start...
5 Ways for Parents to MAKE SOME NOISE

Wendy Angus
Mountain View, California

I am a mom of a 10-year old with Trich. Like most of us, I was horrified, befuddled and helpless when she started pulling Trich was a complete unknown to me. I was embarrassed and freaked out. But, now it’s been over a year since she started. My daughter is managing. As a family we have worked hard to understand trich. We now reach out to our friends, teachers and health care providers to educate them. My daughter feels empowered by her knowledge, less burdened by shame since we try to talk openly with others, and supported by her community.

As parents we are tireless advocates for our children. We spend hours coaching sports teams, volunteering at school, tussling with the PTA, finding just the right camp and DRIVING for days on end. It’s time to put some of this energy into MAKING SOME NOISE about Trichotillomania.

1. Be Rowdy at School!
At the beginning of the school year talk to your child’s principal, teacher, nurse and school psychologist about Trich. Provide them with the TLC materials and the TLC website. DO THIS EVERY YEAR! Update them on new findings.

If necessary, establish a formal agreement with the school for accommodations for your child. My daughter gets to wear a hat or gloves and have fidgets with her in the classroom. REVIEW THIS EVERY YEAR.

2. Be Disruptive in the Classroom!
Give a presentation on Trich to your child’s classroom. Leave lots of room for questions. Of course, get your child’s agreement on this, or encourage them to make a presentation on their own. I talked to my daughter’s 3rd grade class about Trich and the kids had a ton of thoughtful questions. Once they had a better understanding, my daughter’s pulling was not such a big deal to them. Volunteer to start an anti-bullying education program at school. My daughter’s school has implemented Project Cornerstone. http://www.projectcornerstone.org/. Get involved!

3. Be Heard at the Doctor’s Office!
Every doctor my daughter sees (I mean every one: pediatrician, eye doctor, dentist) receives TLC materials. When asked “Are you familiar with Trich?” well-meaning doctors will respond: “Well, yes… I have heard of this.” Take this response as a “No” and start educating!!

4. Be Boisterous at Camp and After-School!
Think of the hundreds of kids that camp counselors and after-school care providers see each week!! When signing your kid up for programs- let the care-givers know that she has Trich. Why mention it? Why not!! Think of this as an opportunity to get the word out. Include the TLC website and materials. Maybe you can help out another family!

5. Be Loud and Proud!
Tell your friends about Trich. Tell your family. Post it on Facebook. Tweet! Throw off your own feelings of shame. Be honest about this. If you are ashamed or embarrassed you will only reflect this back to your kid. When someone says to you, “What’s wrong with your kid’s hair?” say “She has Trichotillomania. It’s a neurological disorder characterized by…..” This will (1) get them to shut up and (2) give them some real information. Get out there and talk about it. Just think how many people talk about their colons these days!

Always remember, get the support YOU need by reaching out to others. Take care of yourself (easy to say but hard to do). It’s not easy, but you’ll find people willing to help you, if you make some noise!

somewhere and break the stigma that trich is not socially acceptable and that people affected with it can ‘just stop.’

I ran the race, raised money, and I felt good about myself and what I had accomplished. Little did I know that the best thing to come out of this would be after it was all over and I got back to ‘normal life.’ After the race, Lily said, “Mom, people know I have something wrong. It’s so obvious. Why not talk about it and educate people in the hopes of helping others.” I had waited to hear words like that from her for so long. It made me so proud that she took a huge step forward like that. I know that it came from her own personal growth, but I like to think I might have helped give her a little push in the right direction.

Lily plans to run with me on the LU race team next year and to continue to raise money for Trich. My goal next year is a full marathon and I hope to continue to reach more people. It’s been a hard road to get to this place but it’s been so worth it.

Early on, a parent on the TLC-Email Support Group told me to embrace Lily’s Trich. At the time I thought, “NO WAY!” Well, guess what - that is the best advice I have ever received. I know it’s hard, but I encourage all parents to do something positive with Trich and show their child that they don’t have to be ashamed. I can look back at my own life and relate to the parent who feels like they are going crazy when their child starts pulling their hair. I was that crazy parent and I thought I could just make her stop. I still have my moments, but it is very freeing to be at peace with it. I am proud of Lily, her healthy attitude, and her continued journey on the road to recovery.
How One Phone Call Changed My Life....

Continued from page 1

I made another desperate call to some old friends. Yes, I was pretty isolated, which I now know just feeds into a spiral of mental un-healthiness. One of them talked, coached and prayed with me on the phone almost every day for a year. I eventually moved back to California, near people that loved me, with or without hair, and let the sun and nature heal me. I worked with the best psychiatrist I could find, who reluctantly agreed to my request to let me taper off all the pharmaceutical medications I was on, replacing them with supplements since he was very knowledgeable in that area as well. We are still “fine-tuning” my regime, but, two years later, I feel alive instead of numb. I’m told that I’m like I was when I was a kid…. feisty, happy and curious. I’m thankful for each day.

Over the years I have attended many different TLC events, and when I saw the 2012 retreat was returning to California, I knew I had to go! When I called TLC to ask questions about the Retreat, I was very surprised and pleased when Christina Pearson, the founder, answered the phone. I had met her a few times, read her book Pearls, attended her workshops, and loved talking to her – who doesn’t? I had inquired about TLC programs for kids; I thought it would be a great idea if TLC had a scholarship to bring kids to the retreat. Christina told me it breaks her heart that TLC’s scholarship fund was limited, and what was available needed to be spread around to all who needed financial assistance to attend the retreat. That night, I couldn’t sleep. I thought to myself, “This is unacceptable. I was one of those kids!” I knew it was time to break my silence. I thought if I could help just one kid get to the retreat and not suffer as much as I did, it was worth speaking out. I realized, for the first time, that my silence was actually hurting other people, and I couldn’t live with that.

So, in July, I sent a letter I never thought I’d send to my family, friends and the doctors I’d seen over the years. I figured out that if everyone I contacted contributed $15, we would raise enough money to send one young person to the retreat. TLC was excited, and they agreed to do the bookkeeping so people could send the tax-deductible donation directly to them. Unbelievably, about 40 days later, we had $800! This was enough to cover registrations for 3 young people. Wow! What if I had 365 days?! Some people I didn’t think would contribute did, and others I expected would, did not. Just as important as the contributions, were the emails I received from my contacts that had never heard of this condition, or TLC. I felt really good knowing that when they encountered someone in the future, (and in all likelihood they would with 12 million Americans suffering), they would be able to point them to TLC for information and help.

This TLC Retreat changed my life. I was reunited with a long-lost buddy from high school, Cheryn Salazar, author of You Are Not Alone, by “accident” because her husband Michael made me laugh so hard I wanted to meet the person that married him. After strumming my guitar for the folks at the retreat, TLC’s Executive Director, Jennifer Raikes, encouraged me to do more music and poetry. What? Someone, actually told me it’s OK to do what I love? As a result, I made the decision to complete my Internship and Board Certification in Music Therapy.
Meeting everyone, professionals and attendees, was so very healing. To be surrounded by people that have suffered like you, is something you can’t put into words. For me, looking into the eyes of some of the attendees was, at times, painful. I mean that in a good way. I saw such beautiful people; yes, stunningly beautiful people, from the inside and the outside. Looking into the eyes of someone that has suffered is a language without words. There is a light that shines from the eyes, which can penetrate your soul. I discovered poets, comedians, artists, musicians and dancers. I don’t think it’s unusual that those with these conditions have creative ways of expressing themselves. I felt so privileged to be in their presence, let alone to get to know others brave enough to reveal a part of their selves that, for most of us, we rarely share.

I learned that the professionals who attend TLC events don’t get paid for their time. What an act of love and dedication! And then there are people like Christina, who I believe are angels in human form, fulfilling a special “mission” to improve the human race. Where would we be without her? If you are in her presence, you can feel vibrations of healing emanate from her. When she speaks, her words are “pearls” of wisdom, earned from personal pain and experience. I love the way she closes her eyes before speaking and seems to tune into it; you can “hear” the silence and anticipation from everyone in the room.

Why am I writing this article and sharing very private, personal things about myself in a very public way? It’s because TLC needs your financial support – NOW, TODAY!! Don’t procrastinate like I did, wasting almost 20 years of my life receiving the Newsletter, but not getting “plugged” into the Retreats, Conferences and Workshops that TLC offers. I’m sure if I had, I would have realized sooner that the in-person experience can never be replicated by computer chats or even one-on-one therapy. You don’t need a college degree or much money to help. You just need a desire and a passion. TLC has given you the purpose. Even a smile and a hug can help comfort someone else that lives with the shame that accompanies this disease.

TLC needs OUR support as sufferers to make scientific breakthroughs, raise awareness, train professionals, and keep the momentum going. Let’s be really honest: the $45 “Basic” TLC membership is a bargain! But, why be only a “member” like I was, for so many years? What if all of TLC’s 1,500 members gave $15 more per month to TLC? In one year, that would be an additional $270,000. What if each of the 1,500 members signed up one additional member during the year? I can think of a few right now. Another 1,500 members at the Basic Membership would bring an additional $67,500 to TLC. Wow! Not only would they be able to help countless more people who are suffering, and train more professionals, maybe we could all go on the first ever “TLC Retreat Cruise” to Hawaii! Learn, heal, make friends and get a suntan?! Book me for 2013 now!!

Dream Big! Christina did and look what she and TLC have accomplished in 21 years. As members, we are all a part of that vision, and, sure, not everyone can contribute above and beyond the Membership. I know what it’s like to have student loans, or struggle to make rent. But now, when I think about going to Starbucks, I think of TLC first and how they could use the money to help others. Yes, TLC takes payment plans. I encourage, yes urge, you to do whatever it takes to go to a Retreat or Conference.

And you know what? I’m THANKFUL for this condition, which I have suffered from almost my entire life. No, I wouldn’t have chosen it. Who would? But, now I realize it’s a gift. Sure, “we” are more sensitive than “average” folks, we are “wired” differently. We see, feel, hear and respond to things others don’t. It makes our lives richer, instead of boring. Deeper, instead of shallow. I’ll take this “gift” any day to meet people like you. I’ll never forget what Christina told everyone during a Seattle Workshop: “Healing is about progress, not perfection.” What a relief! My Dad left this earth before he could see me blossom, but I know he is smiling and proud of me now.

I’ve decided to nickname TLC “Tender Loving Care.” I think it’s appropriate, don’t you? That’s the ultimate message of TLC, as Christina reminded me of recently. It’s a non-profit organization dedicated to giving others Hope and Healing through Love (and Scientific Research). Christina, thank-you from the bottom of my heart, for starting TLC and for keeping your “day job” of occasionally answering the phones!!

Xxoo,
~marika moon (aka “smolensky”)
In the end, you do not have to like the fact that your partner didn’t turn out to be the perfect human being with pristine hair and skin, but you may have to accept that you are in a relationship with a real, flesh-and-blood, imperfect human being. Remember that your partner may also be working to accept certain things about you as well, as you are also unlikely to be a perfect being either. Peace of mind and a good relationship can be the result of accepting things we cannot change.

Another important point in making any relationship work is that, along with accepting your partner’s imperfections, it is important that you learn to accept them unconditionally, in their entirety – imperfections and all. If you focus in exclusively on this BFRB-related behavior you don’t like, you risk reducing them to just one small facet of who they really are. People are made up of thousands of different abilities, qualities, dreams, beliefs, and acts. To ignore everything else about them is to risk shutting out all their good qualities, and all the things that attracted you to begin with.

Many SOs think that along with having a relationship, they also have a special responsibility to get their loved one to do things that are good for them. This might include such things as eating properly, exercising, etc. They believe this concern shows that they are really concerned, and are taking care of the other person. Unfortunately, when they apply this to their loved one’s BFRB, things can go very wrong. They may, for instance, take on the role of being the pulling or picking “police.” It usually starts by the SO watching the sufferer like a hawk, and then alerting them every time they notice any pulling or picking. They may do this by calling out to them, touching them, making a noise (finger-snapping, throat clearing, etc.), or even throwing things at them (yes, I have actually encountered this). They may even go well beyond this by grabbing their arm or hand and trying to physically restrain them. On a different level, some also use sarcasm, guilt, or anger as a way to try to get them to change their behavior.

None of us really has the power to control the behavior of another. Even if someone wants to change, it takes a lot of work. The only person you can control is yourself, so all these tactics are doomed to failure. This can then go on to create even greater and more long-lasting problems; such as blame, resentment, frustration, and anger. You tend to hear SOs voice all sorts of angry or guilt-provoking remarks such as, “Why can’t you just stop,” or “I can’t stand watching you do that over and over,” or “I hate the way it makes you look,” or “Our relationship would be perfect if it weren’t for your pulling/picking,” or “I don’t like being seen in public with you, it’s embarrassing.”

In our appearance-conscious society, BFRBs can be stigmatizing disorders of shame and isolation. Sufferers frequently harbor feelings of defectiveness and freakishness. Everyone with a BFRB would dearly like to stop, if only they could.

Trying to make them feel badly about themselves for having a problem such as this can only add to their burden, make them feel more demoralized, and make them feel less like being able to change. On a further note, the whole situation really isn’t about you. What might it say about you if, while your partner is suffering with their problem, the only thing you appear to be concerned about is how you look when seen with them in public? Do you fear being rejected or stigmatized by simply associating with them? Sounds pretty selfish and self-centered, doesn’t it?

Unfortunately, in our society, we tend only to have sympathy for those who appear to be doing something active to help themselves. Conversely, those who do not appear to be trying to do something about their problem are usually blamed for their ongoing difficulties. We also tend to characterize those who can’t seem to help themselves as somehow being weaker than others, and having less strength of character.

BFRBs are genetically-based neurochemical problems that can be very persistent and difficult to get under control. No one asks for them, and as we said, every sufferer would like to stop what they are doing. These are real biological problems and not indications of weakness. I have always believed that people tend to rise to the level of expectation that we place on them, and that labeling someone as weak and incapable may only contribute to their feelings of being helpless and ineffective.

Treating people with BFRBs harshly can also have another paradoxical side effect. One apparent function of BFRBs is to help people regulate their own nervous systems. They seem to pull and pick when overstimulated (stressed or anxious) or understimulated (bored or physically inactive). Creating emotional scenes, using criticism, anger, or shame, etc., can only create stress, and your partner will then seek to relieve this stress by further pulling and picking. If you truly want them to stop, you can see how anything besides staying out of it can only have the opposite effect.

Just because a loved one is in treatment, it doesn’t mean that potential problems still don’t exist for SOs. You aren’t responsible for making them follow their particular program. Even if you could get them to follow it perfectly when you were supervising, what would they do when you weren’t around? What matters most is what they do when they are on their own. Additionally, don’t expect therapy to go perfectly without any hitches. There are always setbacks and slip-ups – good days and bad. These are a normal part of the process. Everyone must go through them. Sometimes they teach sufferers more than the things they get right! No one learns a complex new skill without making mistakes. It is a normal part of the learning process. Each person must be allowed to learn in their own way. Your partner is no different. The best advice is to stay out of it, and allow them to find their way by themselves. At the most, you can support their efforts and be encouraging.
about the whole process and their need to keep working at it until they succeed.
(email: marika.moon.sc@gmail.com)

Whatever your issues with your partner’s BFRB, one overall problem you need to be aware of is becoming obsessed and overinvolved in it. If this is the case, you might consider getting some counseling of your own, to help you concentrate on living your own life, pursuing your own self-improvement goals, and allowing your partner to take responsibility for their own behavior and emotions. You can tell if you are getting in much too deeply if you note one or more the following about yourself:

• You find that your emotional state is tied to how well they are handling their problem on a given day (up when they’re doing well, and down when they aren’t).

• Thoughts about their BFRB seem to occupy your thinking more than most other topics.

• The BFRB seems to be a daily topic of conversation with your partner.

• You simply cannot stop watching them when they are engaged in the behavior, and cannot resist commenting on it.

• A lot of your time is spent in researching the problem, beyond the point where you are doing anything useful.

• If they are in treatment, you find that you must have constant updates on how and if they are following their therapy. If you feel they are not following it exactly, you find yourself constantly reminding and nagging them about it.

• You find yourself discussing the BFRB with everyone else who will listen.

So after reviewing all these things that don’t work, what are you, as an SO, to do when faced with your partner’s BFRB? Should you do nothing? Is that all there is?

The answer is that there are a number of do’s and don’ts that really can help. Let’s outline them:

• Stop watching your partner. If you don’t like seeing what they are doing, look away and ignore the behavior.

• Don’t be the pulling or picking police. It isn’t your job to prevent the behavior. You will not succeed no matter how hard you try. Many have tried and all have failed. Only one person can control the behavior, and it isn’t you.

• Give up the idea that you can somehow motivate them to change their behavior. Change is the sole responsibility of the person with the behavior. People only recover when they take responsibility for their own symptoms.

• Avoid the use of shame, sarcasm, anger or guilt to try to get them to change. It simply cannot and will not work. It will cause a lot of resentment and other bad feelings that can only damage your relationship. Also, the stress will likely only lead to an increase in pulling and picking.

• Don’t blame them for having the problem. It’s not their fault. As was mentioned, this is a biological problem, and not some kind of weakness. They would gladly stop if they could.

• Don’t make comments on their appearance. Anything you say about it just won’t help. If they are in treatment, you can encourage them if they seem discouraged. Tell them that they will make it if they keep working at it.

• Resist the urge to discuss it with numerous other people – they can’t help, and it isn’t their concern. You will also be guarding your loved one’s privacy.

• If they are in treatment and are making some progress, don’t point out the things they are still unsuccessful with. You will otherwise risk damaging their motivation.

• If they are in treatment, don’t expect things to always go perfectly. Recovery is generally not a smooth process, and slip-ups and setbacks are so common that therapists have learned to expect them.

• Don’t be the therapy police. Don’t remind them or nag them to do their homework. If they aren’t motivated to do it on their own, your efforts won’t be able to make up for it.

• Do be supportive of their efforts to help themselves, and be encouraging about the importance of persistence – even when things don’t seem to be going very well.

• Busy yourself with your own life goals and put your efforts into them. This is where you can make a real difference in life, and do something that may actually improve your relationship.

Dr. Fred Penzel is a licensed psychologist who has specialized in the treatment of Trichotillomania and OCD since 1982. He is the executive director of Western Suffolk Psychological Services in Huntington, Long Island, New York, a private treatment group specializing in trich and O-C related problems, and is a founding member of the TLC Science Advisory Board. Dr. Penzel is the author of “The Hair Pulling Problem,” a self-help book dedicated exclusively to trich, as well as “Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders: A Complete Guide To Getting Well And Staying Well,” a self-help work covering TTM and other O-C spectrum disorders. Dr. Penzel is also a frequent contributor to TLC’s newsletter In Touch.
Dear ones,

From the seed of an idea to a full grown organization of much accomplishment: That’s what you and I have done, in the creation of; maintenance of; guidance of; and devotion to - our organization, TLC. The only one in the world entirely focused on relieving the suffering caused by BFRBs (Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors).

In this issue, our last newsletter of 2012, Jen is reporting on some of our wonderful accomplishments this year. As Founding Director, this inspires me to take a moment to give some of our newer members insight into the longer journey, and accomplishments, of the past 22 years, all of which were part of paving the road to what is unfolding in the world today. I will use the evolution of the Retreat as my story... (And every TLC program has a wonderful story – I just don’t have room here to tell them all).

Last month we completed the 21st Annual TLC Retreat, in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Before I speak on it, I want to jump back in time to the first TLC Retreat, in 1992, held in the very same location! At the time, there were 354 members receiving the quarterly newsletter which ran a full page inviting people to attend the first ever “Retreat.”

Sixty-four attendees came, most leaking sorrow and shame, weary from the hiding and deep desolation of feeling defective and out of control. The first night, everyone spoke. It was agonizing yet cleansing, as the tremendous burdens of deep grief were shared, of life paths not taken for fear of exposure, of loves lost from terrible, overwhelming shame, of living constantly in fear, of living a daily lie. Most, if not all, attendees had experienced decades of pain, and the profundity of what we were doing pierced my soul as nothing else had ever done. We were making space to free the voice of human suffering from trich in a new way, in a natural, safe, and sweetly quiet environment, complete with bonfires and unknown roommates, who turned out to be “old beloved friends we just hadn’t met yet.” We left that event transformed in many ways. Still burdened by degrees of shame, but transformed, nonetheless.

My mentor, hero, dear friend, expert clinician, and TLC Scientific Advisory Board Member, Charles Mansueto, PhD, (Charley), and I have attended all 21 of TLC’s Retreats. Claim to TLC Fame!

WHAT a journey it has been, from that first one; even though fraught with sorrow and desperation, within a few hours the gathering began to resonate with the joy of connection, the ending of isolation. Still – we knew far less of recovery then, and the road before us was long and rocky. (Good we didn’t know HOW rocky!)

Jump forward to 2012: Today, TLC has 1,500 members receiving the newsletter, and thousands of others who visit trich.org, get alerts, etc. The Retreat is not a lot bigger in size (we had about 100 last month) but the Retreat template is now a refined work of living art, immersing retreatants in a powerful 4-day educational and experiential process. Although incredibly changed compared to that first Retreat (after 21 years, it better be!) the heartspace is as alive today as that first night, but the tonality is profoundly different. Yes, there is still sorrow, frustration, and mourning, but NOTHING like the early days. More, there is an overarching aspect of resounding gratitude, sense of opportunity, overflowing joy at connection and reconnection, of possibilities and freedom, if one is willing to do the work. There is a sense of true community, and what is most important of all – there is stronger and stronger Recovery. Of hair, of skin... Of self-esteem... Of a sense of “I can DO this”... Whether or not I am struggling, life can be dealt with, head-up and heads-on!...

Of deepest significance to me personally is the emergence of a generation of young people who ARE learning to navigate richly textured and fulfilling lives, while ALSO managing impulses and growing hair, presenting clear skin more and more, even though they “happen to have trich and/or picking.” They are getting on with life, educating classmates, talking to reporters, writing college theses... on the truth of their experience; and I am so very, very proud of them. They are doing what I, we, who were of a different generation, could not do. They are spreading wings and flying, whether or not a few feathers are “missing!”

And they want to help others. Our young members are smart, compassionate, and motivated. They understand that their unasked for and unwanted condition has taught them much, of suffering, of themselves, of being human, of life in general - and they are thriving. I treasure the gifts they will offer a world that is in such need of strong hearts and clear vision!

TLC Members, together we’re doing a great job! Still fairly small, as the need is great, but look at what is emerging because of YOUR loving commitment to this work.

I am so thrilled and grateful!

All my love, Christina
Dear Friends,

How does it feel to be 21? It feels good. Really good! (Better than I remember it feeling 20 years ago, actually.)

Last year, TLC celebrated our 20th birthday – and in honor of the occasion, we asked you, our members, to create an Anniversary Fund to help ensure a better future for all those with hair pulling and skin picking disorders. You delivered.

I am delighted to report that in our 21st year we have been able to expand our services, reaching significantly more people than ever before. Your donations have had a big impact.

Together, we:

• Doubled the size of our Annual Research Grant Program.

• Launched our WEBINAR series – bringing the world’s best treatment experts and researchers directly to you!

• Increased access to effective treatment by training therapists at our newly updated Professional Training Institute.

• Provided trustworthy information to tens of thousands: Downloads of our Expert Consensus Treatment Guidelines more than doubled! This vital resource was downloaded over 27,000 times in the past 12 months.

• Educated 5,000 Behavior Therapists with the Expert Consensus Treatment Guidelines – during our spring outreach campaign, 5,000 behavior therapists received clear information about the most effective treatment approaches.

• Paved the way to a cure with the Trichotillomania International Consortium for Research: researchers in Boston and South Africa contributed genetic and clinical data to our database to be shared with researchers around the world as they seek better answers for us all.

• Reached hundreds of thousands of people around the world! Visits to trich.org increased by 26% to 379,000 in the past year. Our Facebook “fans” have more than doubled to over 4000, and our posts reach an average of over 3600 people every day! Finally, our Twitter account, which began 2012 with fewer than 100 followers, now has over 900! No one need suffer alone.

Our core programs are going strong, too. Thanks to you, thousands of people received education and a true community of support at our Annual Conference, Retreat, local Workshops, online support groups, and with weekly motivational text messages. You provided a caring listener and trustworthy information to over 5,000 people who reached out to TLC for help by phone or email this year.

Thank you. Millions of people suffer with hair pulling and skin picking. But fewer than two thousand are dedicated TLC Members like you. Your choice to play an active role in ending the suffering is truly special. As we head quickly toward the holidays, I am filled with gratitude and excited to see what we can accomplish together in 2013.

Love and thanks,

Jennifer Raikes

Executive Director’s Report

Jennifer Raikes
Los Angeles, CA
Jennifer@trich.org

2012 – TLC’s HIGHLIGHTS

Important planning underway at the TLC Conference, with Board Members Dana Marie Flores, center, and Debbie Kleinman, right.
On a Memorial Day weekend twelve years ago, our daughter (almost nine years old at the time) pulled half of her eyelashes. The effect upon her and the whole family was profoundly unsettling and disruptive.

In her suffering, she was unable to explain what she had done or why she had done it. As parents, we loudly demanded that she change her behavior. Even though she was not quite nine years old, we thought that she could control this behavior when presented with a high enough level of threatened punishment. How sadly mistaken we were.

We went from psychologist to psychologist. None knew how to treat Trich. One psychiatrist put our beautiful daughter on a medicinal regimen that actually aggravated the urge to pull. It was the worst month of pulling in our daughter’s life.

For those who have a loved one with this disease, we don’t have to tell of the heartbreaking emotions, rejections and whispered slights felt by the sufferer. The isolation is compounded when in public. The looks of shock and surprise are hard not to notice.

We do not recall how we came to know of TLC, but we will never forget the first time calling and hearing Christina’s calm and reassuring voice on the other end. She reached out and touched these bewildered parents.

It is vital to learn the causes and contributing factors of trichotillomania. Only then is it possible to test and compare different treatment modalities. This can only be accomplished through research – and good research costs money.

We are grateful for the unceasing generosity and efforts put forth by Christina and her cohorts and supporters at TLC. We would not know of this disorder were it not for the suffering of our daughter. We consider it a privilege to be able to help bring comfort and knowledge to other sufferers and their loved ones. We are humbled by the true compassion that Christina and TLC bring to helping others to learn to cope.

As recipients of this largesse, we believe it an honor to contribute on an annual basis to help continue this mission.