

Battling *Lice* Head-On



From left: Chante Ballou, LVN, and Penny Warner, BSN, RN, CNA.

It's a problem that's far too common in schools and communities, and it's equally as hard to talk about. The word head lice sends chills down the backs of parents. But what do they do when their child is sent home with head lice? Now, thanks to Penny Warner, BSN, RN, CNA, BC, a former nurse at Memorial Hermann, they can call the Texas Lice Squad.

The nurse-turned-entrepreneur tapped into her business side two years ago, when her daughters, now 8 and 10, were sent home from school with head lice for the second time. Realizing that this was a problem in desperate need of attention, Penny began researching options for the treatment of lice.

"There really is a need for this type of service," said Penny. "People think they are the only ones when battling head lice, but this just isn't the case."

Each year, more than 12 million people suffer from head lice infestations. Through Penny's innovative business approach, families and patients with head lice can now visit the Texas Lice Squad, the first and only professional head lice treatment center in Texas. Clients have access to a full-range of services including head checks, updated lice education and complete nit removal services.

The first time Penny's family experienced head lice, it took more than eight months to rid their home of the pest. They tried many of the remedy's out there – and none of them seemed to work.

"The second time [lice] came into our home I began to research, knowing there was a lot of misinformation out there. We now offer what we call the *Facts of Lice* for our patients," Penny relates.

Penny began her nursing career in 1994 and spent nearly 13 years with Memorial Hermann. "I continue to use my training everyday – and

patients are reassured when they find out that I am a registered nurse," she explains.

Penny has plans of expanding the Texas Lice Squad to Dallas and San Antonio within the next 12 months. "We've been in business for two years and never imagined how busy we would get," said Penny. "My husband and I are both surprised at the number of people who need our services."

Currently, the Texas Lice Squad operates one facility and employs four full-time employees and one part-time employee. There is also another nurse on staff, **Chante Ballou**, LVN. "Chante is really good with our patients and really seems to enjoy what she does," said Penny. Chante has been a nurse for 10 years and has enjoys working with the Texas Lice Squad.

This lice removal idea began as an in-home service and quickly expanded. "By having a store front location we can better accommodate the families we serve, allowing us to effectively treat more people in a shorter amount of time," said Penny. "When we treat one individual we check all family members allowing us to adequately identify sources of possible re-infestation," she added.

Penny says that as a nurse, you would think she would have known how to eliminate head lice, but in the beginning, it just wasn't that easy. "I quickly learned that better lice education was the real key to ending the cycle."

By providing hands-on help while simultaneously educating patients in proper steps towards prevention, Penny Warner and the Texas Lice Squad are able to help parents safely eliminate head lice and stop the reoccurring cases. **NL**

There are 12 million cases of head lice reported each year.

Lice and nits (eggs) are the number one cause of school absenteeism.

Head lice need to feed every 3-4 hours. Most will die within 24 hours of being removed from the host.

The itching associated with head lice is caused by an allergic reaction to the lice saliva. Fifty percent of people do not have this reaction.

A female louse can lay up to 300 eggs in her lifetime.

Source: Texas Lice Squad