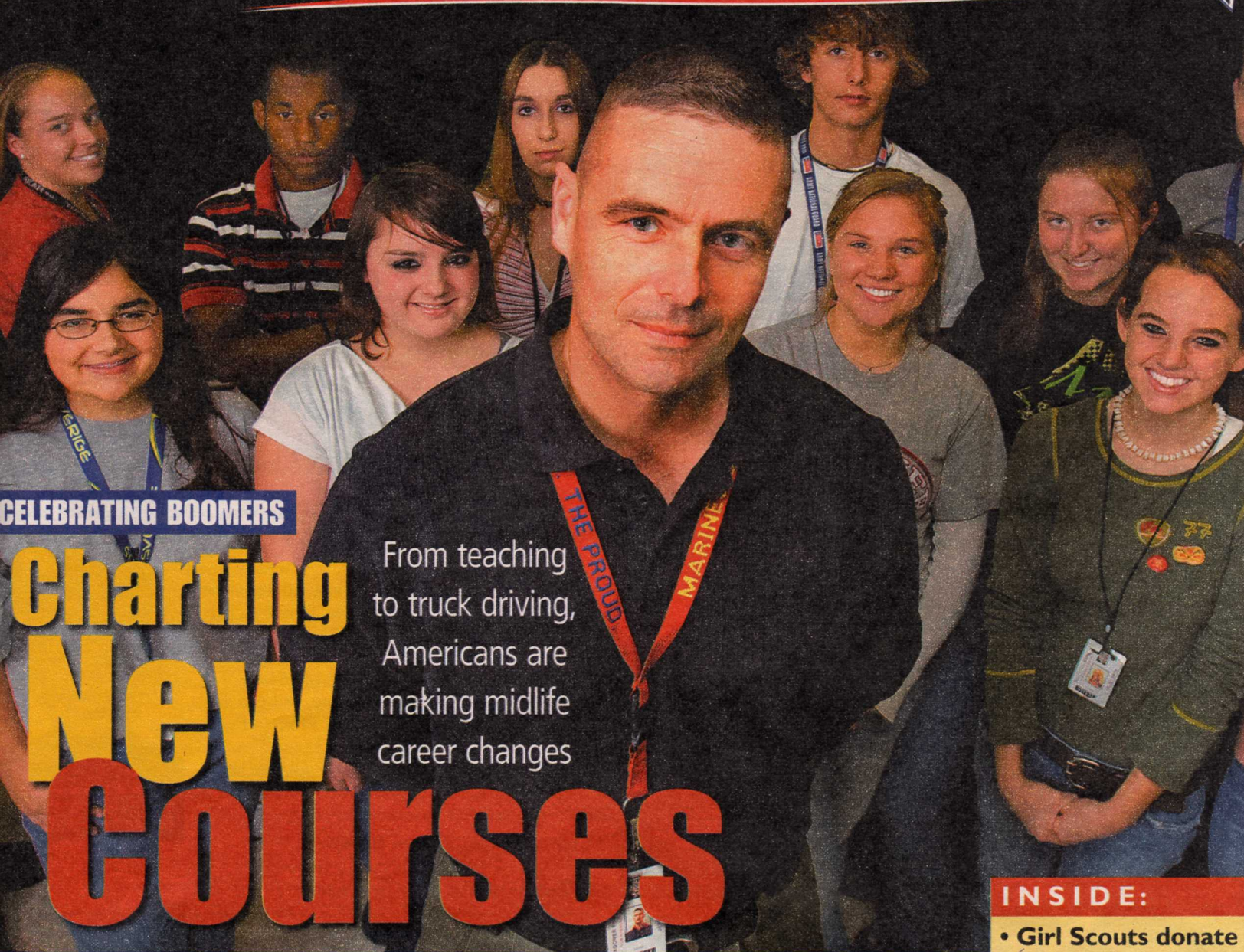


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INSIDE:

- Girl Scouts donate to Locks of Love
- Lovelock, Nev.
- Black bean soup & spicy snack mix

Hometown Heroes

by CYNTHIA ELYCE RUBIN

Donating Locks of Love

With eyes closed and mouth grimaced, Angela Hicks, 12, of Davie, Fla., nervously sits in a beauty salon chair during the Girl Scouts of Broward County's Cut-A-Thon, listening for the final scissors' snip over the loud whirring of hairdryers.

As the hairdresser makes the last cut, Angela opens her eyes and a wide smile appears on the sixth-grader's face. "I feel good, and by doing this I show support for my Aunt Karen who had cancer and lost her hair," says Angela, after donating several inches of her straight blond hair to Locks of Love, a Lake Worth, Fla.-based non-profit organization that provides custom hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children who have lost their hair for medical reasons.

During the Cut-A-Thon, held last October, 10 volunteer cosmetology instructors and seven students at the Sheridan Technical Center in Hollywood, Fla., braided and cut more than 1,000 inches of blond, black, brunette and red hair from 100 heads, enough to create about 10 hairpieces.



Braids are transformed into custom-made hairpieces.



Photos by Jared Lazarus

Hairdresser Denice Henry prepares to cut Bonita Wayne's hair during a Girl Scouts of Broward County Cut-A-Thon in Hollywood, Fla.

"This is the most fun and miraculous thing I have done in a long time," says hairdresser Nancy Jones, "because I make two girls beautiful at the same time."

For their hair contributions, the Girl Scouts receive Locks of Love patches to sew onto their uniform sashes. But that's not why the girls participate.

"I did it because it makes me feel better to do it for someone that doesn't have what I have. I would do it again," says Christina Ustiak, 16, of Pembroke Pines, Fla., who donated a 10-inch braid of wavy brown hair.

The braids will be transformed into custom-made hairpieces and presented to children, ages 18 and younger, who suffer from conditions such as alopecia—an auto-immune disorder that causes hair loss—scalp burns, or lose hair due to cancer treatments.

"At an event like this, donors and volunteers benefit, too," says Madonna Coffman, 45, presi-

dent of Locks of Love.

Coffman, a retired nurse, knows the pain of hair loss firsthand. In her 20s, she developed alopecia and recovered only to feel the pain again when her 4-year-old daughter, Abigail, developed the condition. "After watching my child go through this, knowing there was no medical cure made me want to help less-fortunate children," she says.



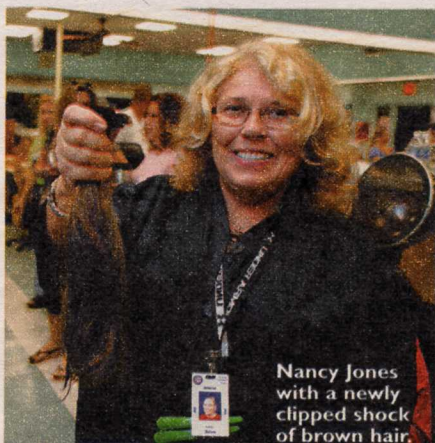
Madonna Coffman founded Locks of Love.

After researching companies that make custom hairpieces, Coffman asked a local hospital to donate office space, and Locks of Love was born in 1997.

Parents fill out an application that includes a doctor's diagnosis. Hairpieces either are free or sold on a sliding scale based on a family's financial need. Recipients begin the process at home by making a plaster mold of their heads using an instructional video and a palette of hair samples from which they choose a color. A manufacturer takes the mold and produces a vacuum-fitted

cap that acts like a suction cup so the hairpiece stays in place without adhesives. Once the child approves the fit, a one-of-a-kind hairpiece from donated hair is hand assembled.

The hairpieces have made a difference in the lives of children across the nation, including Courtney Martzell, 16, of West Linn, Ore. "I had many situations in my life when a wig fell off in public," she recalls. But that changed with her wig from Locks of Love. "I never once had to worry about people pulling it off, not being able to go swimming or running. I could finally put it up, put some curl into it, and do things that girls want to do with their hair. It made me feel normal again," she adds.



This is the most fun and miraculous thing I have done in a long time, because I make two girls beautiful at the same time. — Nancy Jones

Drawers in the Locks of Love offices are filled with children's thank-you notes and photographs that attest to the healing power of donated hairpieces, some 2,000 to date. While wearing a hairpiece is not a cure, it helps restore a sense of normalcy and self-esteem for a child without hair.

"Children are so resilient. They bounce right back with confidence," Coffman says. "I get the best reward when kids just get to be kids again." ☆

Cynthia Elyse Rubin is a writer in Orlando, Fla.

Visit www.locksoflove.org or call (888) 896-1588 to learn more.



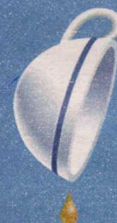
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