Donating My Brain to Science Actually, more like a loan ...

Developing specific biological

measurements or biomarkers are

needed to provide precise and direct

measurements of the state of the

brain which will improve clinical

trials for eventual treatments. The

real heartbreak of the disease is that

it tends to occur at a younger age

than does Alzheimer's disease -

generally between ages 40-75. The

other interesting wrinkle to the dis-

ease is that more than half the peo-

I had a total of three field trips,

ratory, for a PET (positron emission

tomography) scan. At the very new

their Memory and Aging Center in

June and again in December, I gave

in their noisy MRI, or magnetic res

n't a problem. It was basically an

opportunity to focus on breathing

and listen to music interrupted only

In Berkeley, there was tight se-

dementia.

www.lamorindaweekly.com

By Cathy Tyson



A view of Ms. Tyson's brain with normal frontotemporal lobes.

urns out the most difficult at the moment there's no cure and part of getting my head ex- no way to slow its progression. amined was not lying still in a snug Treatment involves managing the MRI cave for an hour, but the traffic symptoms. As these lobes of the getting to the impressive facility at brain gradually shrink, changes in UCSF and back. To be fair though, behavior and personality become I did decline the less than tempting apparent; those with the disease and possibly painful option of the may become socially inappropriate, impulsive or emotionally indifferlumbar puncture that would have topped the difficulty list. ent and may lose language skills.

Looking to participate in some kind of meaningful community service, I happened to see an advertisement in the San Francisco Chronicle seeking volunteers to help out with a brain research study. The initial requirements were easy – being in the right age group of 45 to 55, having no significant deficits in memory or cognition, and perhaps most importantly, not being claustrophobic.

Kind of a mouthful, the Neu- ple have no family history of roimaging in Frontotemporal Dementia study tracks the progression of a type of dementia that causes two to UCSF and one to the the devastating loss of social and Lawrence Berkeley National Labocognitive functions as the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain critical for behavior, emotions and Mission Bay campus of UCSF in language – atrophy or shrink.

Frontotemporal dementia is the most common cause of dementia blood and urine samples, completed and affects as many people as extensive cognitive testing that re-Alzheimer's disease in those under ally made me think, had a neurologage 60. Head Researcher Dr. ical exam and of course a full hour Howard Rosen from the UCSF Department of Neurology is evaluat- onance imaging machine. Fitting ing several different tests to guide into the 22-inch-wide opening wasdiagnosis and treatment of frontotemporal lobe degeneration, or FTLD.

Scientists have made advances by the loud thumping of the main understanding the biological chine. causes of this type of dementia, but

curity getting into the lab, but the PET scan was a piece of cake, blissfully quiet. The radioactive tracer injected into my arm that showed brain function didn't cause any problems. The biggest issue of the day was skipping breakfast, taking a pregnancy test – pregnant women definitely not wanted – and making sure I was metal free, with no zippers or jewelry.

My brain is one of a total 240 that will be examined at three facilities: UCSF, the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., and Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston with sponsorship from the National Institutes of Health. Rosen said they are still looking for additional control group members with no apparent memory problems.

Having volunteered for a number of worthy causes over the years, getting my brain examined for a research study was actually interesting and clearly way more effective than my lame construction attempts at a Habitat for Humanity site. Those interested in more information can visit memory.ucsf.edu or call Aly Caplan, research coordinator at UCSF's Memory and Aging Center, at (415) 476-0670.

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Miramonte Senior Wins Oratorical Contest

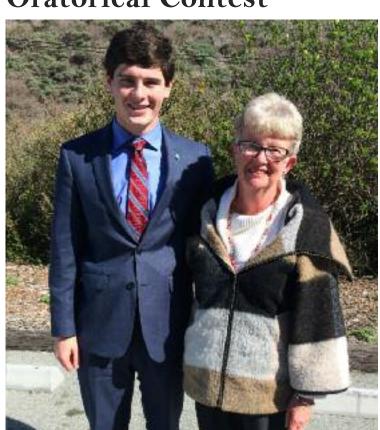
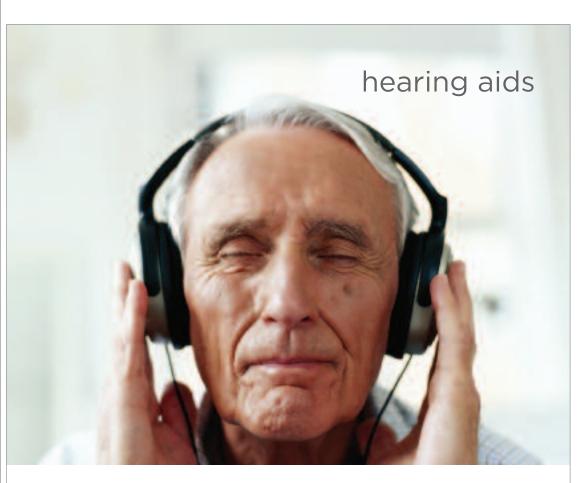


Photo provided

n Feb. 15 in Pacifica, Mira- which is designed to develop deeper monte High School senior knowledge and appreciation for the Sean McFeely, pictured with coach U.S. Constitution among high school Sandra Maguire, won the Area 2 students. He advances to the State Fi-American Legion Oratorical Contest, nals March 8 in Los Angeles.



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