Hairway to Heaven reaches out to clients experiencing medical hair loss

by BREANN HOWELL
Editor

(Editors note: The name of the client has been changed to respect her privacy)

"It was about five years ago when Karen realized she was going to lose her hair. The retired nurse had been diagnosed with alopecia, a potentially permanent and irreversible destruction of hair follicles, which could be attached by glue, tape, snaps, clips or weave, depending on how and where it is worn. Karen said she had a bald patch about the size of a quarter, which kept getting larger. "I went to three dermatologists," she said, noting they prescribed her cortisone creams to apply to her scalp and also suggested she could try using Rogaine.

Karen's hair loss did not stop. She purchased a wig, which she wore only once on vacation. "I lied on her height and teasing her hair to hide the bald area." This past December, she was considering a hair transplant, an expensive procedure which may or may not be rejected by her hair follicles, when she learned about some of the replacement systems offered at Hairway to Heaven. Karen said she was impressed with the replacement business located at 531 Center Road in West Seneca, for several reasons. Karen was told she could wear a lightweight, natural hairpiece which could be attached by glue, tape, snaps, clips or weave, depending on her lifestyle and personal preferences. "They measure your scalp," she said. "And it's (the hair replacement system) much lighter than the weight of something you said. "And it's a very friendly atmosphere," she said. "I felt very comfortable coming into the building, and they work with you in regard to color and style. You have privacy when you come in."

About four to six weeks after Karen's initial consultation at Hairway to Heaven, her hair replacement system arrived. The hairpiece is slightly larger than her palm and is fixed to an open netting so it is breathable. Though she comes to Hairway to Heaven to have the system reattached and to have her hair colored each month, Karen said wearing the hairpiece requires no extra effort on her part. "I've found this to be very comfortable," she said. "I can wash it, comb it or tease it and it feels secure. It adheres very well. You don't feel it."

In addition to being low maintenance, the hairpiece also looks completely natural and has earned Karen several compliments. In fact, she said her husband does not even know she is wearing a hair replacement system. Karen is one of two clients with alopecia currently coming to Hairway to Heaven, according to co-owner Linda Miller, who said the second woman has lost all of her hair. Miller said she would like to reach out to more clients like Karen, particularly those dealing with hair loss caused by medical conditions. "We are finding out men and women are looking for hair replacement alternatives, and they didn't know where to go or how to take the first step," she said. Though hair loss is more common associated with men, co-owner Judy Klump said that since the business opened, she has seen mostly women clients. In addition to forms of alopecia, Klump and Miller said a number of factors can cause people to lose their hair, including thyroid problems, menopause, stress, chemotherapy, dialysis and heredity. Miller said a mother and daughter who are experiencing hair loss due to high blood pressure medication are among the female clients at Hairway to Heaven.

As part of the effort to aid more individuals experiencing hair loss as a result of medical conditions, Miller said she hopes to get Hairway to Heaven listed in the resource directory for Roswell Park Cancer Institute. Seeing Karen's reaction to her new hair was wonderful, Miller said. "When she walked out of here, she was beaming from ear to ear," she said. For more information on Hairway to Heaven, call 674-4411.