

Mary's Message

Did you know that FMAH has no paid employees? It is amazing to think about what has been accomplished in the past 12 years by many dedicated volunteers. Led by the Board of Directors, FMAH has grown from a group of five fibromyalgia patients to almost 2,000 people on our mailing list.

Volunteers produce this newsletter (thank you, Dot Anderson and Sheshe Giddens!). The Hotline, which is staffed by caring volunteers, helped over 450 callers last year. When members arrive at a meeting, volunteers are there to greet them. Volunteers planned the 2001 and 2003 patient conferences. Many volunteers have also helped to make our garage sales successful.

What I find most amazing is the dedication of our volunteers. The vast majority of them have fibromyalgia, and many also have other illnesses, yet even when they're not feeling well, they're still there for others. I've asked some of them why they work so hard, and almost all of them say that it feels good to help others. Many say that they forget about their own pain when they help FMAH.

Why should YOU volunteer? Because a very small number of dedicated people has done 95% of the work, and they need help! We need new ideas and energy. If you have benefited from FMAH, please consider giving back. Call Volunteer Coordinator Janet Gingell at 281-859-0209 to find out ways that you can help.

Take care,
Mary Harper
President

FM Awareness Day

Wednesday, May 12, is Fibromyalgia Awareness Day. This event was started in 1992 by a CFS sufferer, Tom Hennessy, who is president of RESCIND (Repeal Existing Stereotypes about Chronic, Immunological and Neurological Diseases).

He chose May 12 because it is the birth date of Florence Nightingale. As you know, she was a pioneer of the Red Cross Movement and founder of the first school of nursing, but did you know she was debilitated by pain and fatigue, resembling fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome?

Since then, Fibromyalgia Awareness Day has become a worldwide effort to educate politicians, health care providers, and the public about this disease with almost invisible symptoms. For more information on this, visit the Web site of the National Fibromyalgia Association, www.fmaware.org.

We have also updated our literature and revised our Spanish translation so we can provide information in the city and county health clinics.

Our invitation to you is for each person who reads this

The Fibromyalgia Connection is published three times a year by The Fibromyalgia Association of Houston, Inc. (FMAH), a 501(c)(3) charity, and its volunteers.

Materials and opinions presented in the newsletter are for information only and do not necessarily reflect the views of FMAH, its Officers, Directors, or Medical Advisory Board. Fibromyalgia (FM) patients should consult their physicians or other health care professionals for diagnosis and prior to initiating any form of treatment or exercise.

The Fibromyalgia Connection is not responsible for typographical errors or omissions in its printed matter. FMAH and *The Fibromyalgia Connection* are not affiliated with any other fibromyalgia organization.

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Send correspondence to The Fibromyalgia Association of Houston, Inc., P.O. Box 2174, Bellaire, TX 77402 or FMAHHouston@yahoo.com.

Visit FMAH online at www.fmah.org.

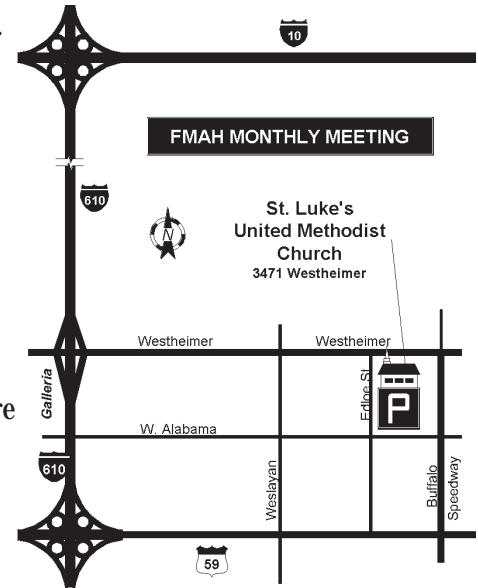
For more information about fibromyalgia, call the FMAH Hotline at 713-664-0180, and a volunteer will return your call.

Support Group Meeting Schedule

We meet at St. Luke's United Methodist Church and greatly appreciate the space they provide for our meetings; however, FMAH is not affiliated with any church.

Companions are always welcome.

All meetings are free and open to the public. FMAH reserves the right to substitute speakers if necessary, so for more current information, please call 713-664-0180. Parking is free in the church lot.



- LOCATION:** St. Luke's United Methodist Church
3471 Westheimer (just inside the 610 Loop)
- ROOM:** Parlor B, on the Westheimer side of the church
- TIME:** 6:30 p.m. – New members, please come 15 minutes early to register.
- May 25, 2004 **Heather Taylor, PhD,**
Center for Research on Women with Disabilities
Vera Gonzales, PhD, co-presenter
Pain Self-Management
- June 22, 2004 **Pi-Yi Mayo, JD**
Applying for Social Security
- July 27, 2004 **Rosemary Hughes, PhD**
Center for Research on Women with Disabilities
Stress and Depression: Tips on Prevention and Self-Management
- August 24, 2004 **University of Houston, College of Pharmacy**
Bring your medications and supplements.
Please Make Reservations.

FMAH Meeting Schedule

May: Pain Self-Management

We are privileged to have two prominent speakers on this topic. **Heather Taylor**, PhD, Assistant Director of Research, Center for Research on Women with Disabilities, returns to discuss how we can learn to manage our pain. Dr. Taylor also has personal life experience managing chronic pain due to her diagnosis with multiple sclerosis in 1999.

Joining Dr. Taylor will be health psychologist **Vera Gonzales**, PhD. Founder of Health Psychology Services, Dr. Gonzales is an expert in her field. She is a Diplomate in Pain Management from the American Academy of Pain Management.

June: Applying for Social Security

Pi-Yi Mayo, attorney, has spoken with us before, and we are always honored to have him return. He will be here to update us on applying for Social Security disability, which is traditionally a long and frustrating process for people with fibromyalgia. Since there is still no definitive lab test for fibromyalgia and since we usually look so normal, it is hard to convince the system of our pain and fatigue. Mr. Mayo has navigated the system many times, helping people with fibromyalgia obtain their disability insurance, and can advise us of the pitfalls.

July: Stress and Depression

Dr. Rosemary Hughes is Director of the Center for Research on Women with Disabilities and Assistant Professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

Dr. Hughes is licensed as a psychologist in the state of Texas, and she holds a PhD in counseling psychology from the University of Houston. She has directed various federally funded grants on the health of women with chronic and disabling health conditions, including projects on stress and depression.

Dr. Hughes has published and presented nationally and internationally on the psychosocial health of women with disabilities.

August: Brown Bag Meeting

This is an event many members look forward to each year. Bring *all* your medications and supplements in a brown bag and let a pharmacy student from **The University of Houston, College of Pharmacy** answer your questions.

This is a great opportunity to understand your medications, ask questions about your supplements, and find out the best way to take them. **Reservations are necessary.** Please call the Hotline

at 713-664-0180 or e-mail FMAHouston@yahoo.com. Tell us your name and how many are coming with you. Deadline for reservations is August 17, 2004.

Every Month: Join Us for Dinner

Want to beat the traffic and have some fun? Join us for dinner. A group of volunteers meets at 4:30 p.m. before each meeting at **Cleburne Cafeteria**. It is located just five minutes from St. Luke's Methodist Church, on the corner of Edloe and Bissonnet and one block from Channel 13 studios.

The Cleburne features home-cooked food and reasonable prices. Dinner is Dutch treat, and the Cleburne accepts cash only.

You'll find us in our FMAH T-shirts, so we'll be easy to spot. Come enjoy good food, lively conversation, and lots of laughs.

**Visit FMAH online
to keep up with
latest news or to
learn more about
fibromyalgia.**



www.fmah.org

Proof of Pain

By Dot Anderson

In 2003, both *Newsweek* and *Arthritis Today* magazines reported on research using MRI to measure brain activity as it relates to pain. Prior to this research, pain could be measured only by qualitative measures, with patients giving doctors pain-rating scores of 1 to 10.

The problem with this system is that there is no consistency among numbers, no way to determine what a self-reported score of seven really means. My pain report of seven is probably not the same as your pain report of seven.

In both studies, when a pain stimulus was applied and the subject reported the perception of pain, the MRI showed blood rushing to the areas of the brain

involved in pain perception. Furthermore, the self-reported pain score correlated with the brain activity, giving quantitative validity to the subject's pain perception.

One study measured the subjective perception of pain when the same pain stimulus was applied to different subjects. In theory, a consistent pain stimulus should produce a consistent pain response among subjects. What they found is that people who reported greater or lesser pain to the same stimulus showed greater or lesser brain involvement on the MRI.

The second study dealt specifically with fibromyalgia and pain perception. A small amount of pressure was applied to the thumbs of fibromyalgia patients

and nonafflicted control subjects. The control subjects perceived nothing more than having their thumbs rubbed and showed no unusual brain activity.

The fibromyalgia subjects perceived pain and showed appropriate brain activity on their MRIs. Although it did not answer the question of why we feel pain when none should exist, for the first time a study indicates that fibromyalgia pain is real.

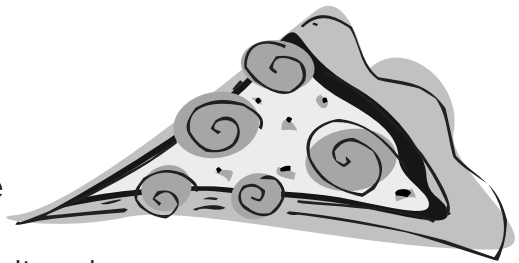
This is great news for us, and it contradicts all those naysayers who have claimed FM pain does not really exist. If you believe your doctor needs to read these articles and you want to know where to locate them, write us at FMAHouston@yahoo.com or call the FMAH Hotline at 713-664-0180. ■

Who Likes Pizza?

We have available for sale coupon cards from Papa John's Pizza. It's a guaranteed no-risk purchase because the first savings offer is for a free large pizza – a \$9.95 value. The card sells for \$10.00, so even if you never use it again, you've broken even. But there are a variety of savings on the back of the card, ranging from buy a large, get a small one free, to a free side order, to a large pizza for \$6.99 (16 in all).

And here's the best news. Out of the \$10.00 that you pay for the card, our organization gets to keep \$7.00. It's a win-win situation for everybody. The card is valid in the Houston/Galveston and Bryan/College Station areas. It makes a great gift for family and friends.

The cards are available at meetings, or you can mail a check for \$10.00 and a stamped, self-addressed envelope to FMAH, P.O. Box 2174, Bellaire, TX 77402, and we'll mail the coupon card back to you right away.



Garage Sales

By Mary Harper

This year, we were doubly blessed to have two garage sales in one month. The first sale was held at my home in March.

Members donated countless clothes, household goods, furniture, and even fishing rods!

Second Childhood, a consignment shop on Holcombe, donated many quality children's clothes and toys.

The kind folks at **A-Alamo Mini-Storage** on Alameda Road donated a truckload of things that people had left behind at their storage units. They even loaned us the truck to deliver the goods to my house.

Volunteer **Bernadean Rosenblatt** and her husband, **Bernie**, arranged for us to receive the leftovers from the Westbury Lions Club sale that was held just before our sale. Those items, combined with all of the other donations, helped us to raise almost \$2,000 in one day.

One of our members, **Elizabeth Tully**, suffered the loss of her mother, **Mary Ann Auderer**, last September. As executor of her mother's estate, Elizabeth carried out her mother's wishes that part of her estate be donated to charity. Some of the money went to purchase the *Memory Minder* books that we sell as a fund-raiser. In addition, Elizabeth chose FMAH to be the recipient of the proceeds of the The FIBROMYALGIA Connection

remaining personal effects at her mother's home. Combined with the first sale's leftovers, the second sale on March 20 netted almost \$800. Thank you, Elizabeth, for your generosity and hard work coordinating the sale.

I would like to thank the following people for helping at the first sale: **Hal and Mary Ann Clinton, Toby and Richard Robbins, Janet and Ralph Gingell, Susan and Bill Edwards, Jeff Harper, Gayle and Mike Moses, Deborah Filip, Sandy Coughran, Barbara Willis, Bernadean Rosenblatt, Catherine Scott, Frances Davis, Donna Gatewood, Renate Reibel, Nicky Baggett, Sherry Spikes, Dot Anderson, Melissa Green, Cynthia Burton, Lois Rosenfield, and Katherine Berno.**

A very special thank you goes to the following volunteers who helped at BOTH sales; your dedication inspires me: **Hal and Mary Ann Clinton, Susan and Bill Edwards, Gayle Moses, Deborah Filip, Dot Anderson, Renate Reibel, Nicky Baggett.** Other volunteers who helped with the second sale were **Ginny and Pete Honaker, Denise Fieglein** and her daughter **Rebecca, Kate Bulman, Marvin Kluttz, and Carolyn Lawson.**

And of course, thank you to **Elizabeth Tully** for her generosity. I have tried to remember all who helped with the sales. If I have inadvertently left your name off the list, please forgive me. We

appreciate **everyone** who contributed to our success.

Visit www.fmah.org to view photos from the garage sale. ■

FMAH Donors

The following generous donors are people who have given contributions by check. Unfortunately, there is no way to thank each of you individually who made cash contributions, but we do appreciate every donation you give us.

* Indicates donations of \$50 or more. Thanks to all of you!

Madelyn Armstrong

*Barbara Canny

*Sandy Coughran

*ExxonMobil

*Donna Gatewood

Melissa Green

*Mary Harper

Linda Hurtado

iGive.com

Viola Kaplan

Carolyn Lawson

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Carolyn Medlin

Patricia Presswood

*Randalls

Toby Robbins

Carla South

Sharron Strang

Mary Suhr

Beverly Swope

*Elizabeth Tully

L. Bert Williams, DC

***Fran Jordan** in memory of her father and brother, **Ernest M. Webster** and **Ernie Webster.**

Candlelight Plaza Civic Club in memory of **Mildred Finerty**, mother of **Donna Gatewood.**

Facts on Hypnosis

The following is from a handout by Diane Pope, who spoke at our March meeting. It is being reprinted here with her kind permission. She can be contacted at 281-787-2777 if you have questions.

Hypnosis and hypnotherapy have been around for centuries, but most people are still curious about what it is and how it works. Books and the media often present a helpless victim totally controlled by the evil hypnotist. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

What is hypnosis?

Hypnosis is a mental state where the body and conscious mind are fully relaxed while the subconscious mind is alert, awake, and able to receive suggestions. Hypnosis is a process of communicating information to the person's mind that allows the subconscious and conscious minds to believe the same thing.

How does hypnosis work?

While the conscious mind rests, the hypnoterapist makes suggestions to the subconscious mind. This way, the intellectual mind does not argue with or change the suggestions. If the suggestions do not conflict with the person's belief system or moral and ethical views, the subconscious mind informs the alert conscious mind of the new reality.

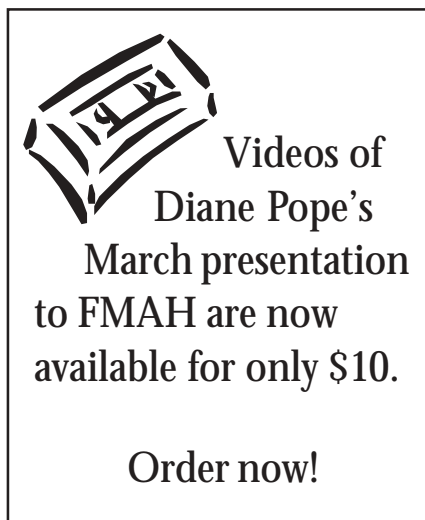
Who can be hypnotized?

Anyone who has the desire and is willing to follow the

hypnoterapist's instructions can be hypnotized.

Can hypnosis make me lose weight, quit smoking, etc.?

Hypnosis cannot *make* you do anything. Sorry. You can't eat burgers, fries, and shakes and be hypnotized to make the calories not count. If you want to make life changes, hypnosis *can* help you make those changes easier and faster.



Videos of
Diane Pope's
March presentation
to FMAH are now
available for only \$10.
Order now!

In what areas is hypnotherapy helpful?

Addictions, body and mind healing, pain, fears/phobias, guided imagery for secular or spiritual growth, health, concentration and learning skills, medical and dental procedures, childbirth, nail biting, teeth grinding, regressions, public speaking, relaxation, sports skills, smoking, weight control, and many more. Some areas require a physician's referral.

How much of the mind does the therapist control?

None. The person is always in control of his/her mind. The subconscious mind will not accept suggestions that go against a person's morals, self-preservation, or ego. The subconscious will accept only suggestions that are in the person's belief system.

What is a hypnoterapist?

Unfortunately, in Texas there are no standards for training or identifying a hypnoterapist. Some have learned to hypnotize from a friend in the college psychology department. A day or a weekend course program has certified some. Others have read a book.

Psychiatrists, psychologists, dentists, and ministers may train through their professional schools. Some national and international organizations, in an effort to provide qualified hypnoterapists, offer extensive training programs and require certification testing.

How do I know if my hypnoterapist is qualified to help me?

Be an informed consumer. Ask if the person is certified and by what organization. Ask what the organization requires to certify a hypnoterapist. It could be a wonderful training course, testing and continuing education,

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HYPNOSIS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6
or it could be a check made out
in the right amount.

Ask what experience the therapist has in working with problems like yours. Some hypnotherapists have health field backgrounds. Some, like ministers, have a religious background. The most important question may be whether you feel comfortable with the person.

Never work with a person who is too busy to talk with you and answer your questions before you start a session. ■

AWARENESS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
newsletter to do something to raise awareness. Wear your FMAH T-shirt all day if possible (if you don't have one, see the order form in the back). Challenge yourself to educate at least one person about fibromyalgia. It can be your neighbor or co-worker, a doctor who failed to recognize your disease, or even a grocery store clerk.

Just imagine! If we each educate one person, over 2,000 more people will have knowledge about FMS that they didn't have before May 12. Maybe five fewer doctors would tell someone it's all in his or her head.

Maybe 20 new people with FM would find out there is hope and support through a support group. That seems like something worth working for. *Don't forget May 12.* ■

The FIBROMYALGIA Connection

More Medication Information

By Dot Anderson

Follow-up on Pregabalin

Thank you to member **Linda Trivers**. After the last newsletter went out, Linda contacted FMAH about findings in the Pregabalin research that it caused tumors in rats.

According to the Pfizer Web site, early drug trials did produce questionable results with tumors in rats. The FDA, in concern, delayed approving the drug and asked Pfizer to do additional studies to quantify the problem.

After the additional studies were completed, Pfizer reported that there were some instances of tumors (hemangiosarcomas) in one type of rat, but lifetime studies found no incidences of increased tumors in rats. The FDA gave approval for Pregabalin to move into the final stage of testing. (For more information, refer to the Winter 2004 newsletter.)

Xyrem (Sodium Oxybate)

Xyrem is a medication used for narcolepsy. In a recent study reported in *The Journal of Rheumatology* 2003, 30:5, Xyrem was found to effectively reduce pain and fatigue in FMS subjects and to significantly reduce the sleep abnormalities of alpha-wave intrusion during deep, non-REM sleep. Due to the decreased intrusions during deep sleep, human growth hormone (HGH) levels increased. In studies, HGH has consistently been lower in people with FM than in healthy subjects, and HGH is produced during deep sleep.

Currently, Xyrem is distributed by one central pharmacy and is an FDA Type 3 medication, so filling a prescription for it is not as simple as a trip to your local pharmacy.

However, these findings are important because they are apparently the first to show reduction of the alpha-intrusion anomaly, one of the hallmark symptoms found in fibromyalgia. Information and a video about this medication were donated by **Paula Franklin**. ■

Sound Familiar?

By Dot Anderson

“My aunt’s neighbor’s mother has fibromyalgia, and she takes XYZ.”

“I had fibromyalgia, but I cured it with (fill in the blank). If you’d just try it....”

Have you heard statements like these? Or even worse, “Oh, I forget things all the time. It’s just part of growing old. There’s nothing wrong with you!”

And the ever popular “But you look so healthy.”

Remarks like these are not made by insensitive strangers whom we can snarl at and then ignore, but by our own family and friends.

Well-meaning people want to be helpful and make us feel better. How do we tell them they’re failing miserably at their self-appointed task?

Some FM101-Awareness lectures are always helpful, and, given enough information, most people will stop offering useless advice, but it takes energy to explain all that is going on with your FM. If you are not up to it, don’t feel obligated to give lengthy explanations.

Sometimes you can get away with a simple “Thank you for sharing the information.” For someone close to you, though, you want to give them a satisfactory answer without offending them (even though their advice

may be offensive to you).

One easy solution is to ask them why they think this therapy would be good for you. You haven’t shut the door on their conversation, but you have left them to do the majority of the talking. Use this, of course, only when you have the patience to listen to their response.

Some days, patience is an endangered commodity. This especially applies when their advice is something you have heard a hundred times before. It’s difficult at these times not to roll your eyes and plead, “Okaaaaay. Will you people ever leave me alone?”

Most people recognize and respect the limits you set with your answers. You can simply say “Thank you, but my doctor thinks a different therapy is better for my symptoms,” or “Thank you. I’ll look into it.” They know you have heard them and have acknowledged the possibility of their advice. They respect your right of self-determination to use the advice as it benefits you.

What about the people, though, who believe their advice is so wonderful and so good, and that the only reason you can’t see it too is because they’ve failed to properly convince you?

For example, Aunt Mamie tells you if you take her medica-

tion, XYZ, you will feel better immediately. You respond with your standard “Thank you, but I’m happy with the protocol I’m on.”

Aunt Mamie bounces back with this zinger: “Well, if you really want to get well, you’ll take XYZ. You just like being sick.” Your first thought is “This is Aunt Mamie, and I must be respectful,” but your next thought is “but Aunt Mamie has really made me angry and I want to tell her where she can put her XYZ.”

You go with your first thought, of course, because she is your Aunt Mamie, and you try to formulate a polite reply. You swallow your anger and stuff it back inside you to become stress.

This helps no one, you least of all. What you need to realize is that even though she is Aunt Mamie, she is not being respectful, she has ignored your boundaries, and she probably is more concerned about being heard and being right than about your well-being.

You can be firm and take control, yet still be polite, by closing the door on the discussion. You can say, “Aunt Mamie, I appreciate your concern, but I just don’t want to make any changes right now and don’t want to talk about it anymore.”

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Welcome, New Treasurer

Welcome to our new Treasurer, Susan Edwards. Susan has been officially diagnosed with FMS since 1998, although she has probably had it since 1991.

She is almost a native Houstonian (born in Springfield, Illinois, but moved here at age 3) and has been a member of FMAH since 2000.

She is a math teacher with a BBA and a master's in math curriculum. She has two children, a 22-year-old married daughter and a 24-year-old son in college, and has a husband who, she says, helps a lot (and has helped FMAH a lot). We are very pleased to have her join the Board of Directors, and ask you to welcome her, too.

Memory Minders

Don't forget we have the Memory Minder books for sale. The Memory Minder is a journal that allows you to record how you're feeling, weather changes, what you ate that day, exercise or activities that need to be noted, and anything else that could affect your health.

Besides being an excellent reminder of "what happened when," it can provide information that would be helpful when you visit your doctor (dates of flare-ups, food reactions, frequency of exercise, etc.).

If you are applying for disability, the Memory Minder will be an invaluable way to document
The FIBROMYALGIA Connection

your condition. To order, see the order form at the back of this newsletter. The price is \$16.00 (includes shipping), or purchase one at the meetings for \$14.00.

iGive.com

Want to help FMAH? Go shopping! That's right, go head and buy something for yourself – a blouse, the latest bestseller, essentials like toothpaste or vitamins, even a computer. But first visit www.iGive.com/joinLink. Every time you shop at one of the over 500 name-brand stores in the Mall at iGive.com, we'll receive a donation of up to 26% of each purchase you make, at no cost to you.

Remember, donating to FMAH won't cost you a thing, but we'll miss out on a lot of extra money if you don't join. So visit www.iGive.com/joinLink now. Membership is free, and your privacy is guaranteed. Our president, Mary Harper, has raised over \$120 just by sending flowers and gifts and buying pet supplies through iGive.com.

Changes at Randalls

If you have already linked your card to FMAH, thank you! We're getting 1% of your purchases donated to us. If you're not sure, or if you have questions, call the Good Neighbor Program at 800-430-4483.

Tell the operator your account number, and she'll tell you if you're linked to FMAH. If you

would like to link your card to us, simply go to the Customer Service Booth and ask for the **Good Neighbor Program** application. Fill it out and put charity #1094 in the appropriate space. Once you're signed up, your purchases are automatically applied toward FMAH. Applications are available at meetings.

Kroger Card

Do you shop at Kroger? Please remember to use your **Share Card**, as Kroger donates 1% of your purchase to FMAH. You can pick up cards at a meeting, or call us at 713-664-0180 and we'll mail as many as you need. Give them to family and friends. When you check out at Kroger, simply present your card to the checker before she rings up your purchases. This is an easy and cost-free way to make a donation.

Health Fairs

FMAH volunteers Renate Reibel, Nicky Baggett, Aaron Hamilton, and Mary Harper recently staffed a booth at the Masterson YWCA. They distributed information about fibromyalgia and answered questions from attendees.

If your company or organization is planning a health fair, we would be happy to staff a booth. Contact us at the Hotline, 713-664-0180. Please keep us in mind, as this is certainly one way to promote FM awareness.

The Katy FMS and Chronic Pain Group

By Dot Anderson

The Katy support group had an excellent meeting in March with **Dr. Isabel Martinez**, Blue Mesa Medical Associates, presenting mainstream and alternative treatment options and **Bobbi Horne**, a Unicity Nutraceutical Education Specialist, discussing alternative vitamins and herbal products.

Dr. Martinez is a Katy physician who has worked with many fibromyalgia patients. We had as many new attendees as members present for that discussion, with Dr. Martinez taking time to answer all questions.

In April we had a discussion on progesterone and chronic pain with **Tracy Foster**, and then discussed plans for Fibromyalgia Awareness Day on May 12. In May we will have a demonstration of yoga for fibromyalgia, presented by group member **Susan Trinacty**.

June 2 and July 7 will be roundtable discussions and August 4 and September 1 meetings will be devoted to fibromyalgia, loss, and grieving, led by Bonnie Hopkins and **Dot Anderson**.

The group meets on the **first Wednesday of each month**, 6:30 p.m. at St. Peter's Methodist Church in Katy. For more information, contact Dot Anderson, 281-578-2858, or DotAnd@aol.com.

From Our Readers

I wrote in the last issue that I would like to start a column of letters or questions from our readers, but no one responded, so I have nothing to put here. This newsletter belongs to all of us, and more of us should be heard.

Sincerely, I would love to hear from you. Please take a minute – if not today, then next week or next month – to write and share what's on your mind.

You can mail it to FMAH, Attn: Dot, P.O. Box 2174, Bellaire, TX 77402, or e-mail us at FMAHouston@yahoo.com.

Tracking Pain

Ginger Astolfo recommended www.paintracking.com, which discusses ways of improving fibromyalgia symptoms by listening to our bodies and keeping a written record of pain.

FAMILIAR CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Then immediately change the subject to something Aunt Mamie enjoys talking about even more. She will forget being offended as she launches into her favorite monologue, and, if it's too boring, you can always zone out or excuse yourself.

Another area of contention is the people who continually ask you to help with things they know you cannot do. Why do they keep asking? Did they forget? Did they fail to listen the first (twenty) times? Do they not believe you are really ill or fatigued or in pain?

What is the most effective way to get your message across to your loved ones without allowing them to make you feel guilty?

The most important thing to is never to let guilt force you into doing what you know you shouldn't do. Again, your boundaries are not being respected; and the lack of consideration is on their part, not yours.

If you truly feel obligated to help (and are not just responding to guilt), honestly remind the person that you are not able to do that task, then offer to help with a task you can accomplish.

For example, if your sister is moving and asks you to help move boxes, tell her you can't deal with heavy boxes but will watch her three-year-old while the house is being emptied or you will help her pick out wallpaper samples later.

It is easy to get frustrated with well-meant but unsolicited advice. It is also easy to forget that most comments are made out of ignorance and are not meant to be mean-spirited.

However, if we empower ourselves in advance to remember that we do have control and we do not owe anyone more than we want to give, we can defuse the frustration and respond firmly but politely. It also helps the people close to you learn to recognize and respect your boundaries and judgment, which is what you truly want to accomplish. ■

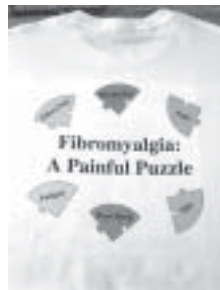
The FMAH Store

Books, Videos, T-shirts, and More!

All information is presented for informational purposes only and reflect the views of the authors.

	Quantity	Price	Total
Books:			
<i>Living with Fibromyalgia: A Practical Guide to Coping</i> edited by Thomas Romano, MD, and FMAH	_____	\$ 7.00	\$ _____
<i>The FM Help Book,</i> by Jenny Franzen & I. Jon Russell, MD, PhD	_____	\$23.00	\$ _____
<i>FM Connection</i> - out-of-state subscription newsletter: 3 issues per year	_____	\$10.00	\$ _____
<i>Memory Minder Personal Health Journal</i>	_____	\$16.00	\$ _____
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