

## *Tracey's Scoliosis Journey*

My name is Tracey Heinz and I first found out that I had scoliosis in December 2001 during a routine school screening when I was in eighth grade. I had no idea what scoliosis was back then until I saw a doctor and told me that I had a curve in my back. My thoracic curve at that time was around 52 degrees.

I started out by seeing the doctor every three months just doing x-rays. The doctor noticed a slight increase in my curve and told me on my next visit, that I will need a brace if it continues to worsen. Six months later, my curve went back down to 48 and the doctor decided not to give me a brace and told me to come back another six months later. By that time, 2003, my curve stayed the same and he told me I didn't need to be examined anymore.

A part of me was excited that I didn't need a brace. I knew how much that brace would affect my life physically and emotionally. But the other part of me questioned if I would ever find a way to get better.

Several years later in September 2008 at the age of 21, I started getting severe back and neck pain with headaches twice a day. I figured it would go away a day later but it continued to get worse. I went to a local orthopedic clinic in Brainerd, MN to check if maybe my curve went back into the 50s. The doctor told me that my thoracic curve was at 51 degrees and there was nothing he could do. So he referred me down to the Twin Cities Spine Center.

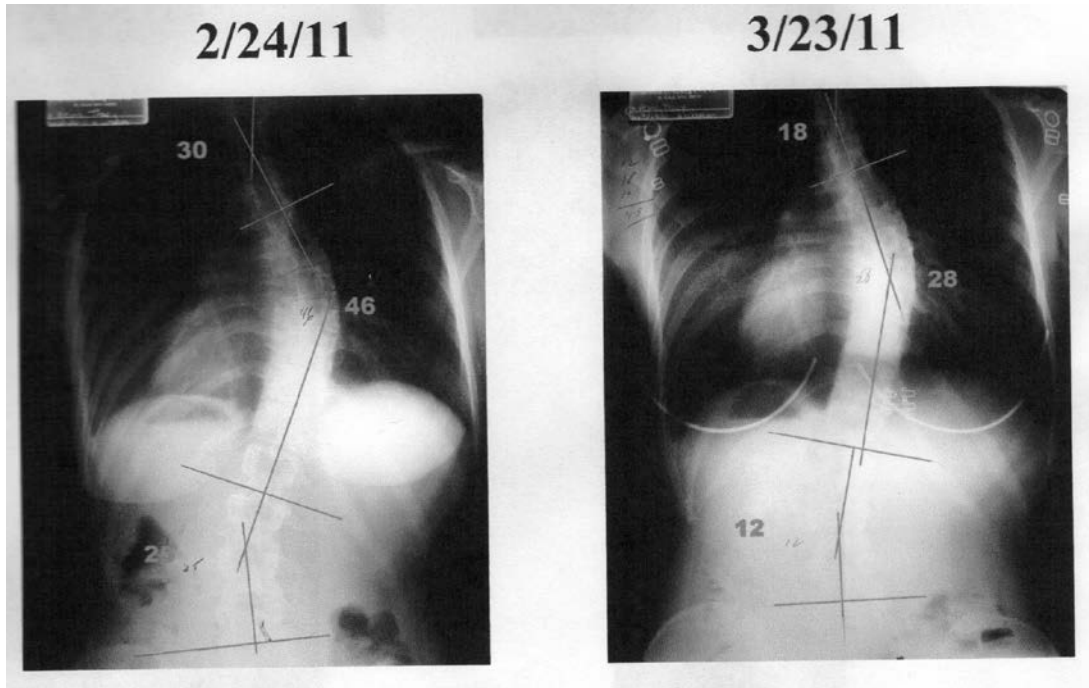
On October 6, 2008, I learned at the Twin Cities Spine Center that my thoracic curve was at 51 degrees and that my spine showed some hypokyphosis which the doctor referred me to St. Cloud to take a pulmonary function test to make sure my lungs were not diminishing. If they were, I would need surgery right away. Luckily, my tests came back positive and my lungs are great.

I then came back for a two year check up in October 2010. My hypokyphosis remained the same as well as my 51 thoracic curve and headaches. I wasn't happy that my results didn't change and the doctor recommended surgery. Surgery...I was scared when I heard him say that. I told him I wanted to think about and come back in a year or two. The real reason was that I didn't want surgery and I wanted to find a different way besides having steel rods in my back that wasn't guaranteed to fix my problem forever. That all changed on October 22, 2010.

That day I got a call from my mom. She told me, "Something made me want to look at the newspaper stand and you wouldn't believe what I saw on the front page." It was an article about CLEAR Institute at the St. Cloud Chiropractic and Scoliosis Center and how they can treat scoliosis without bracing or surgery. I read the article and got excited that there is a way to help my scoliosis. I did more research on CLEAR on the internet and talked to Dr. Woggon and decided to start my treatment in late February of 2011.

The treatment included going three times a week for four weeks of adjustments, traction, gait therapy, massage therapy, and exercise therapy including spinal weighting and sitting in a scoliosis traction chair for 30 minutes. Also, I have to do home exercises twice a day including traction, spinal exercises and spinal weighting for 20 minutes. After my four

weeks of treatment, my cervical went from 30 degrees to 18. My thoracic curve dropped from 46 to 28 and my lumbar was at 25 degrees to 12 degrees.



I can't believe I lost that much curve in just four weeks and I no longer qualify for spinal surgery! It takes lots of dedication and determination going through all the treatments and exercises. Without Dr. Woggon, Dr. Chong, and the friendly staff, I wouldn't be where I am now.

I would like to thank Dr. Dennis Woggon and Dr. SuYen Chong for giving me hope to never give up and for making me feel better again!

Now at the age of 24, there were times that I wished I never had scoliosis to begin with but now I know I was meant to have scoliosis so I could share my journey to other young teens and adults to never give up and that it's never too late to find hope.