

No Time to Waste

In the world of organ transplants, timing is everything. So when members of an Arkansas heart transplant team recently faced an unexpected delay due to a rather important individual, they took decisive action to overcome it.

The team was retrieving a donor heart from a Des Moines, Iowa, hospital. But they weren't the only important visitors in the area on that October 2006 day. "President Bush had been visiting Des Moines," recalls Paul Sodders, MHA, Public Affairs Manager of the Iowa Donor Network. "And just as the heart team was getting ready to leave the hospital with the donor heart to fly back to Arkansas, we learned that there would be no flights leaving the Des Moines airport until after President Bush left on Air Force One."

With no time to waste, a transplant coordinator made a bold move. "He called the airport and asked to speak with the Secret Service," says Sodders. "He explained that the heart team really needed to leave on schedule. He asked them to do anything in their power to help."

The Secret Service rose to the challenge. They told the heart team to head for the airport immediately, and relayed a message to the Presidential motorcade, already on its way, to slow down. "The heart team beat the motorcade to the airport, and with the quick action of their pilot, who was also coordinating with the Secret Service, they were airborne just before the President arrived," says Sodders.

This story is just one example of the focused determination that characterizes the nation's transplant community.

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From the Editor

—LYNN BAUDO

Behind the darkest cloud of the dreary Winter chill is a Springtime begging to burst forth.

~ RUSTY BERKUS


As the seasons change we are reminded that nothing is permanent. After the dark clouds of winter, spring returns. Sunny days of summer will follow the spring rains.

For many people who are grieving, the renewal of springtime, **life after grief**, does come. If we are able to look beyond our grief, inner forces may surface and help provide us with the strength to survive the loss of our loved one. Working through grief requires patience and perseverance, and can be a painful process, but it is needed to ensure future emotional and physical well-being.

Renewal is a stage in the healing process, which combines the understanding of love and loss. It is a time for reflection, reprioritizing, and searching. Patience with the process and allowing feelings to come without judgment can help. There is no right or wrong way and no set timeframe. Go at your own pace, step by step.

As you emerge from the darkness of grief, depression lifts and there is a feeling of hope.

Suddenly living seems a little easier, happier, and less stressful. Although life is never the same again, it is a beginning of creating a new self that is forever changed. You learn to think differently, functioning with a determination that focuses your energy in a more positive manner that allows you to begin to enjoy the life you still have. It is a new season with a new hope.

As spring blooms, so do the possibilities for your grief to turn to peace. May your journey through the seasons of your grief, guide you, help you and inspire you in your search for **HOPE, PEACE and JOY.** 

Spring

*Spring is life
Spring is hope
so is love and
happiness.
Spring renews.
Without spring,
life is forlorn.
Spring is nostalgia
after bitter storm.
Put spring in your heart.*

~ ARCHIE GREENIDGE, FROM POEMHUNTER.COM



TRIBUTE ARTICLE:

Glimpse of a Donor

Ryan Matthew Regan

March 30, 1974 – March 8, 2002



—RAE MACKOVIC, aunt of Ryan

He was born Ryan Matthew Regan, March 30, 1974, and was the oldest of three. In his younger years his interests included dirt bike racing, Star Wars and playing with his sisters and cousins. His mom was well known for providing wonderful child care in Whitewater. She loved all kids and hers would be the house they all came to play at. Ryan was just like his mom—unselfish, friendly, loving and caring.

At an early age, Ryan was exposed to violence in the home. His mother pursued a divorce and created a plan to keep her children safe. Despite her efforts, one day in October 1983 his father took his mother's life and then his own. Ryan was just nine when this happened.

We were the ones who raised Ryan and his sisters after the tragedy. He was the kind of kid who probably had the first nickel he ever received. He was a wonderful big brother not only to his two sisters, but to our two children. We had a houseful—Ryan was nine, and his sister seven, our son six, our daughter five and Ryan's youngest sister was three. Because he was the oldest of five, he had to adhere to the rules and set the example; a job he did very well.

He would grow to be a very loving and caring, yet cautious young man. His sport in high school was cross country. He was very popular, not so much for his athletic ability, but for his personality. He was voted Homecoming King his junior year; it was a very emotional night for me. I remember peering down from the balcony at the high school, watching as Ryan was being crowned and thinking of his mom and how she should have been the proud mom in those bleachers watching her “first born” being crowned. My teary eyes and broken heart saw what should have been hers to see.

Ryan rode in the MS Best Damn Bike Tour to help raise money for MS research. During his college years he met his fiancé; they would be together nine years. They had

planned to marry in June 2002. Ryan had become very ill the fall of 2001. He had made several trips to the Emergency Room in Milwaukee where they would hydrate him and send him back home. Those months were very difficult for him as well as his fiancé. Ryan's Grandmother had asked him to get a second opinion, but I think he had been told it was stress related so many times that he came to believe it.

The last Christmas we would have with Ryan, he told us that he was down to his high school weight which was 52 pounds lighter than he should have been. That Christmas Eve (2001) would be the last time we would see Ryan. It was a day in which we all forgot about his sickness because he acted like he hadn't a care in the world. There was so much laughter that Christmas; I am positive that he had a great time.

We received a call at 12:15 am Monday morning, March 4th, 2002 from his fiancé. She told us to come quickly to St. Luke's Hospital in Milwaukee because Ryan was on life support. We picked up our two kids and on the way our son made a call to Pastor Wendt. Ryan's two sisters were headed south from northern Wisconsin. We all met at St. Luke's ICU in the wee hours of the morning. Our pastor rushed in and we all joined him in prayer at Ryan's bedside. We stayed day and night with Ryan for four days. No one knew why this young healthy looking, blond haired, blue eyed boy was lying on life support. His illness seemed to be a mystery to the medical profession.

Ryan had a gathering of 12 - 15 family members and friends round the clock. On Thursday as I walked into his room I saw Ryan's fiancé, his sisters, his brother and his close friends from UW-Platteville all around his bed telling stories of his life. They were watching the TV program “Friends.” Seems every Thursday at UW-Platteville he and his friends would all get together to watch it. I think they all knew that this would be their last Thursday with Ryan.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Message of Hope

*A whispered wish of remembrance
 Silent words of loss
 A song of good bye
 An unspoken prayer for lasting peace
 A message of hope
 Rejoice for the spirit that has passed.
 Release the sorrow and the sadness.
 Rebuild a life again.
 Emerging from your cocoon so gently placed
 Sensing the freedom in the waiting sky*

*Wings open and quickly a flight
 A drift in the air
 dancing with the wind
 Aglow in the sunlight.
 The message of hope
 Touching the spirit
 Teaching to begin anew
 Transforming the wish into hope
 on the radiant wing of a butterfly.*

KIRSTI A. DYER, MD, MS

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Glimpse of a Donor **Ryan Matthew Regan**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

On Friday, March 8th the doctor told us that they had pronounced Ryan brain dead at 12:30 pm. Ryan had suffered death from an undiagnosed illness which was eventually diagnosed as Addison's disease; a disease that is rare, but very treatable. Because of its rareness it was something never considered by the doctors during his trips to the emergency room. When the hospital staff came in to talk to us about organ donation, the decision to donate was unanimous. You see, to know Ryan was to know how he valued his life as well as all life, so we knew exactly what Ryan would have wanted.

The Wisconsin Donor Network let us decide when we would be ready to let him go; we decided early Saturday morning at 12:30 am. Everyone had left the hospital by midnight, including myself and my husband, but moments later I remembered that I needed to get some paperwork for my mother's return flight to Florida. As I came back up to the cardiac floor, I met the donor staff. They told me they would wait until I had said my goodbyes to Ryan. I explained that I had already done so and that Ryan knew people were waiting for transplants, so they could prepare him. I stood quietly across the hall from the nurse's station as they prepared the paperwork for me. I could see the donor staff preparing Ryan for his final journey. As the staff came down the hall with Ryan and approached me, they again asked if I wanted to say goodbye to Ryan. I quietly just said "I love you, Ryan." As I looked up, the nurse's station was lined with every staff person on duty, they too wanting to bid him farewell.

They never knew him, but each and everyone sensed how special his life had been. They had heard his life story and couldn't believe all this young man had been through. I walked behind the staff as they wheeled Ryan to the elevators. The elevator doors opened and they pushed Ryan's bed inside. Before the elevator door closed, I told Ryan again that I loved him. My eyes met those of the donor staff just before the doors closed and the tears I saw in their eyes showed me that they too mourned his passing.

The doors were now closed and Ryan was gone. I softly said in a prayer to Ryan's mom (my sister) that she had the pleasure of bringing this wonderful child into this world and I was honored to be with him (for her) when he left it. Ryan's mom had him nine years, my husband and I had him for nine years and his fiancé had had him for nine years. Ryan was only 27 when he went to be with his mom in heaven.

As Christmas approaches, I can see Ryan and his mom challenging my Mom and Dad to a game of partner euchre. Then I smile as I imagine Ryan once again having to say "no table talking Grandma and Grandpa."

The short life Ryan lived made a huge impact on everyone that knew him. He lived his life to the fullest and gave us the two greatest gifts of all...love and life.

Ryan, you touched our lives in a way that could have only been guided by the hand of God. I love you!



Will I Feel Joy Again?

BY ELAINE STILLWELL

AS I ARRIVED BREATHLESSLY at our monthly bereavement group support meeting, I announced that I had just returned from seeing the matinee performance of a Broadway musical in New York City. Later, one lady approached me and asked unbelievably, “You mean to say that some day I’ll want to go to the theatre again?”

Gently, I replied, “You might not feel like it today, but trust me; the time will come when you will actually be able to enjoy that pleasure again.” She sat down with a mystified look on her face and hope in her heart that what I said would come true.

Another lady who bravely came to her first support meeting exclaimed, “I can’t believe my eyes – people are wearing clothes that match and women have make-up on!” Those basic decisions seemed overwhelming to her in her grief where the tiniest decisions were very difficult to make.

The newly bereaved constantly want to know if their hearts will feel joy

again. Will that torturing pain that goes all the way down to their toes disappear, or is it to be part of their lives forever? After losing my nineteen-year-old daughter, Peggy, and my twenty-one-year-old son, Denis, in the same automobile accident in 1986, I can honestly say that as time went on, the excruciating pain that felt like a vise wrenching my heart has dissipated. It has made room for little seedlings of joy to enter and take root there. It became springtime for my heart, as I gradually realized that in every ending there is a new beginning. As I was able to release that past and let it go, seeds were planted that produced a rich new harvest for me to enjoy.

IN THE FIRST YEAR OF MY GRIEF, I felt like a robot. I tended to my needs and those of my family, home and job in a mechanical way – feeling very little except the unending pain and utter exhaustion that assaulted my mind and body. As the months passed, I gradually felt tiny rays of joy penetrating the hard shell of grief that encased my heart, and I welcomed them in.

In those early days of grief, one of my first memories of smiling and truly enjoying something was driving in my new car. I had always loved my little red Plymouth Horizon with the white racing stripes on the side. It fit into every place I wanted to park and was so easy to maintain. I had the memories of all my children learning to drive in it. But riding in my new Buick Park Avenue was like a dream on wheels and it was then that I realized

why my son used to tease me about “that little piece of plastic” I drove, as he referred to the old car. I laughed every time I got behind the steering wheel, I knew Denis and Peggy were as thrilled as I was and that they were enjoying the ride with me.

Another joy that opened my heart to happy things was the party we hosted on the first anniversary of Peggy’s and Denis’ death to launch their Memorial Scholarship Fund. It had accumulated \$7,000 in the first year, but it needed to top the \$10,000 mark to become an “official” scholarship bearing their names at the University of Dayton in Ohio. Over 100 dear friends, young and old, gathered at a lovely seaside restaurant to offer their moral and financial support. The scholarship went over the \$14,000 mark that day, making it very official. Being surrounded by so many loving friends on that first anniversary was such a bonus for me, turning a nostalgic time into a very special day knowing that Peggy and Denis were indeed remembered by so many and in such a fruitful way.

Cards with heartfelt messages sent to me all during the year, both on special occasions and just-thinking-of-you times, touched my heart deeply. Knowing people who cared carried me on those rough days made my heart sing on good days. Most people, who haven’t suffered a loss, don’t realize that spontaneously sent loving notes can lighten the burden in a grieving heart. We need ongoing “card-therapy.” Sympathy cards and notes delivered at the time of the funeral need follow-up notes as grief becomes more real and the shock and numbness diminish. Those simple messages of caring can bring rays of sunshine to a weary, overburdened heart.

Whenever I felt particularly down (and we know those days show up

unannounced), I would listen to a favorite tape that had the most inspiring music for my heart. The vocal was done by a dear friend who had sung at Peggy’s and Denis’ funerals, and his melodious voice and soothing words gently eased my pain. I would hum along with him, whether I was relaxing in my recliner, dusting, vacuuming, cooking or driving the car. I actually wore out the tape from overuse and had to get a new one. My husband never complained about hearing it so many times. He was happy to see the joy it brought me and the twinkle that returned to my eyes.

As a working wife and mother, getting to the beauty parlor once a week used to be a delightful treat for me, but after my children died it took me a year to return there. I simply couldn’t sit that long in one place without crying my eyes out. Since I really didn’t feel comfortable sobbing in public, I didn’t go. When I felt stronger, I timidly returned to “getting beautiful” and tried something new—I had my hair frosted. It’s strange, but that frosting, little blonde highlights on my brunette hair, made me smile and feel alive again. I learned to put “frosting” on my list of “Things to do Again.” We never know what it will be that takes us out of the doldrums! I say, “Memorize it and do it ten times.”

WHEN MY CHILDREN WERE IN DIAPERS, I put my name on a county list for a beach cabana, a little bathhouse with changing and storage facilities right on the ocean, ten miles from our home. Twenty years later, after I had buried two of my three children, my name reached the top of the list and a phone call came from the beach office offering me a cabana rental for three seasons. Even though my son had been a

lifeguard at that very beach, my daughter had been the ticket-taker at the entrance booth, and my children had died on the bridge that leads to the beach, I couldn’t say no to the man. I had waited so long, and the beach held so many happy memories for me. We had spent summer after summer there as a family.

My husband and I decided to drive there and see what our hearts felt. Would the ocean be soothing and peaceful as we remembered it or would it be soul-wrenching for us? It would be the first time we had gone over the bridge since Peggy and Denis died. Could we handle that? Bravely, we drove there and walked the beach. Our hearts felt at home, even though every tall, blonde lifeguard made my heart jump. We had three precious years at the beach cabana until our turn was up and we had to get back on the list again. We did find joy in relishing the sand and surf, relaxing hours and beautiful sunsets, collecting seashells, inviting friends, barbequing tasty dinners, chasing hungry seagulls and finding time to mend our wounded hearts. I think getting us out every day to delight in nature’s beauty and experiencing God’s healing power was a special part of our therapy.

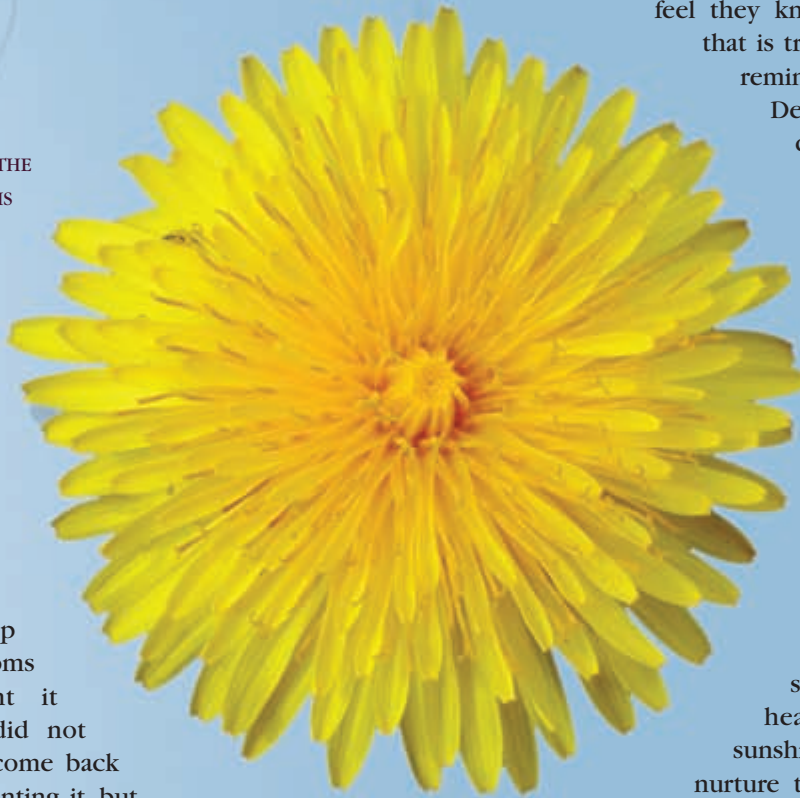
As a newly bereaved mother, anything that gave my heart a brief respite from pain and provided a moment of joy was welcome. Reading everything I could get my hands on about surviving supplied me with some positive thoughts to get through my days. Finding touching poetry that echoed my myriad thoughts and feelings was like having my own personal cheerleaders. Having someone write exactly what was in my heart eased my pain and even made me nod and smile. Every Sunday I carried my two favorite paperbacks to church and read the cherished passages over and over, oblivious to the priest and

congregation worshipping around me and to the sermon of the day. Those few thoughts carried me, answered some of my soul's questions, soothed the wild spirit of my grieving, and inspired me to put on my rose-colored glasses. I'm sure the folks in my pew wondered when I would ever finish those two books! They had no idea how much joy those precious words brought to my grieving heart.


with inexpressible joy. She had believed she could never feel joy or happiness again, but to her surprise she actually found joy in her darkness. Through the belief of Kami, an innocent child, the mom's heart was open to feel joy again. All she needed was the faith of a child, believing that God can resurrect even those things which we believe c a n ' t

presence doesn't mean He isn't there. This mother felt the rebirth of joy in her heart through the simple message of a Mother's Day lily.

As the years go by, my joy is in sharing Peggy and Denis with the world through my writing and speaking, simply telling folks what helped me the most on my grief journey. When people tell me they feel they know Peggy and Denis, that is true joy. And when they remind me that Peggy and Denis are still making a difference in the world, my heart sings.



b e resurrected. She did not believe the lily could survive the darkness of winter and she did not believe that she could survive the darkness of her grief and suffering after losing all four of her children (she had lost an infant son years before). He was working on his mom in the darkness of her grief. She began to realize that just because we don't always experience God's

These little seedlings of joy nestled into my "winter" heart and as the "spring" of my grieving arrived, these tiny joys grew and blossomed, nurturing me along the hard journey. So look for those little seeds that stir your heart, put them in the sunshine of your love and nurture them so you, too, will feel that in every ending there is a blessed beginning which will bring much joy to your heart and soul. 

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A S I WAS PUTTING THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON THIS ARTICLE, I received a

letter from a friend, another bereaved parent, who shared this tender story with me. Her nine-year-old daughter, Kami, had presented her with a beautiful potted stargazer lily for Mother's Day and reminded her that the lady in the florist shop said that when the blooms die she should plant it outside. The mother did not believe the lily would come back and kept putting off planting it, but finally she gave in to the relentless persistence of her daughter. Together they planted the lily in the backyard. Winter came and the lily died. Kami and two of her brothers also died that winter. The mother's world became totally dark.

The following spring when the lily sprouted and grew to produce twenty-seven fragrant pink blooms, the mother's heart became filled



We remember our donor heroes who in their last hour gave the **gift of life.**



april

Christy Z 4/21/1998	Nancy C 4/17/2003	Melvin J 4/30/2004
Mary J 4/28/1999	Patricia F 4/7/2003	Jacob S 4/9/2005
Timothy N 4/18/2000	Earl F 4/9/2004	Chet N 4/12/2005
Mary L 4/15/2000	Camilo C 4/10/2004	Nikeemah H 4/18/2005
John R 4/14/2003	David S 4/10/2004	Neville P 4/23/2005

may

Virginia S 5/23/1991	Richard P 5/20/2001	William S 5/8/2004	John S 5/1/2006
Randall J 5/10/1992	Ellen B 5/9/2002	Mitchell K 5/11/2004	Russell J 5/2/2006
Blake D 5/24/1994	Leah T 5/28/2002	Victoria J 5/25/2004	Alysha A 5/13/2006
Robert V 5/25/1994	Barbara O 5/4/2003	John M 5/6/2005	Emelia D 5/14/2006
Thomas B 5/13/1995	Rose S 5/5/2003	Robert E 5/6/2005	Jerry C 5/15/2006
Steven S 5/8/1996	Brandon B 5/12/2003	Robert V 5/9/2005	Cory L 5/16/2006
Frank R 5/14/1996	Robert W 5/12/2003	Matthew W 5/12/2005	Lisa O 5/21/2006
Maria M 5/31/1996	Justin N 5/16/2003	Bounxou L 5/14/2005	John M 5/23/2006
Helen W 5/22/2000	Brad G 5/22/2003	Tiana T 5/14/2005	Randell B 5/24/2006
Angela V 5/24/2000	Nils S 5/23/2003	Darrel C 5/18/2005	Harold T 5/31/2006
Michelle D 5/13/2001	Margaret N 5/29/2003	David B 5/21/2005	

june

Michael P 6/8/1990	Carolyn V 6/14/2000	Jay F 6/18/2003	Ashley R 6/5/2006
Russel D 6/16/1991	Angela P 6/15/2000	Tadd M 6/30/2003	Wendy S 6/7/2006
Dennis S 6/16/1992	Christopher G 6/15/2000	Joshua C 6/9/2004	Barbara A 6/16/2006
Rachel J 6/18/1998	Ryan C 6/20/2000	Janet W 6/19/2004	Ronald C 6/18/2006
Joshua P 6/19/1998	Brian S 6/29/2001	Christa C 6/22/2004	Thomas W 6/20/2006
Michael N 6/24/1998	Jeffrey H 6/9/2002	Rose D 6/29/2004	Dawn N 6/21/2006
Brian T 6/27/1998	David R 6/23/2002	Daniel W 6/18/2005	Mary S 6/22/2006
Brian R 6/9/1998	Gene H 6/24/2002	Noah Z 6/22/2005	Jerry A 6/27/2006
Dustin W 6/20/1999	Norene S 6/27/2002	Tamala G 6/27/2005	Michael B 6/28/2006
Michael P 6/11/2000	Andrew H 6/13/2003	Russell M 6/2/2006	

Wisconsin Donor Network Stats

95,534 people in the United States are now awaiting organ transplants.

1,549 in Wisconsin are awaiting organ transplants.

Through the end of **February, 2007**, the Wisconsin Donor Network coordinated the donation of

31 organs by **10** donors (not including tissue or living donors).

Through the end of **February, 2006**, the Wisconsin Donor Network coordinated the donation of

13 organs by **4** donors (not including tissue or living donors).

Events to Remember

April 2007 | National Donate Life Month, National Volunteer Appreciation Month

April 21, 2007 | Milwaukee Brewers Donation Awareness Game
Milwaukee Brewers vs. Houston Astros, 6pm

We apologize for the misspelling of Greg Mueller's name in the last issue. Thank you again Greg for making the protective cover and carrying case for the newest donor quilt.

Article Deadline

MAY 25, 2007

Do you have an article idea for The Tribute? Would you like to submit a *Glimpse of a Donor* for consideration? Would you like to review a book pertaining to donor families? Please send articles by the deadline via email to: mkerhin@fmlh.edu. Be sure to include your name and phone number with submissions. We reserve the right to edit content that we choose to print.

The Tribute is produced quarterly for the donor families of the Wisconsin Donor Network, the organization federally designated to manage organ donation in southeastern Wisconsin.

To add a family member to our mailing list, or to provide comments, call 414.805.2023 or email cjastroc@fmlh.edu.

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