

# Lung transplant gives second chance for 30-year-old Cystic Fibrosis sufferer

By PAUL MITCHISON  
*Special to the Beaver*

Scott Young knows how lucky he is to be alive, following a double lung transplant two years ago that has given him a second chance.

"I was able to get to a different level of life, full of energy and spirit," said the 30-year-old, born with Cystic Fibrosis, but who says he's now in the best physical shape in

which he's ever been.

"Today, my life is wonderful. I have few physical restrictions and I work out regularly," said Young, guest speaker at the annual meeting of the Lung Association, Halton Region in Burlington, Tuesday.

The Lung Association pays for education programs and research into diseases of the lungs.

The energetic Hamilton man poured out his gratitude to the people in his life who provided support in the months and years prior to his life-saving transplant, including the volunteers from the Lung Association. "I'm a concrete example of the work the association has done, and I thank all of you very much."

Young was born and raised in Hamilton and talked about how his Cystic Fibrosis – a chronic disease of the mucous glands – had little effect on his life until he reached his late teen years.

As a strong athlete with aspirations toward a professional hockey career, Young, at first, refused to accept that his illness would increasingly worsen his health and his ability to live an active life.

Finally, a gradual decline left him in a Toronto hospital with a life-threatening lung infection at the age of 25, and a doctor explained that

without a double lung transplant, he couldn't survive. "It was like someone hit me with a ton of bricks," he said.

In his despondent state, he remembers the feeling of irony when he reached for a newspaper and saw a story on his childhood friend and sports rival, Allan Bester, playing in the NHL. By contrast, Scott was only able to watch hockey on television, and come to grips with his own mortality.

During the first few months waiting for his transplant, Scott saw his marriage fall apart. When he wasn't in hospital, he was forced to take an oxygen machine with him, so he just remained in his apartment.

But his attitude and outlook soon changed.

His mother left the family business in Colorado to return to Hamilton and help nurse him. A transplant support group gave him comfort.

Then he met a woman who loved and supported him, and saw him for the person he was before he lost weight and lived next to an oxygen tank. "She saw what was inside me, and raised my spirits."

After one false alarm when lungs became available, but were deemed unsuitable just prior to transplant, a suitable donor was found in Thunder Bay, in May of 1992. The transplant was a success, and his body hasn't rejected the new lungs, removed from a 25-year-old male who was declared brain dead following a shooting incident.

Since the operation, Scott said he's felt strong and healthy, and is writing a book about his experience.

While he still has CF, the transplant has meant the end of his suffering, and he actively encourages people to agree to contribute their organs after death.

"Not everyone does as well as I have, so it's important that a cure be found," he said, noting that many people still die at young ages from the disease. "They've isolated the gene that causes it; I'm confident there will be a cure found soon."