



RESPIRON - CARE•PLUS - Your Community Home Health Care Centres

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April 23 - 30 is Organ Donor Awareness Week

Plan Ahead for The Gift of a Lifetime

If you have made the important decision to be an organ or tissue donor make sure you aren't the only person who knows about it. Prior discussion with your next of kin about your wishes will help insure that your decision is carried out.

Scott Young knows how important this can be. The 30 year old Hamiltonian had a double lung transplant in 1992. He is alive today because someone he didn't know took the time to make a clear decision.

Scott was born with cystic fibrosis, a condition in which abnormal amounts of mucus can cause infections and lung tissue damage.

During his late teens and early twenties, Scott suffered a slow decline in lung function before his condition deteriorated dramatically. He required oxygen therapy twenty-four hours a day and was unable to do any physically demanding activity.

Scott admits that he was initially shocked when told that he would require a lung transplant to survive. Like many people he hadn't given much thought to organ donation.

For the next 14 months, Scott was on a waiting list at the Toronto General Hospital along with about 25 other patients.

"It seemed like an awfully long time," Scott said. "And it was only that long because people weren't donating."

Today, everything has changed for Scott Young but not much has changed for others waiting for life saving transplants.

Scott is an active healthy young man who enjoys playing hockey and baseball and working out. He appreciates the ability to do such a simple thing as walk around a shopping mall.

Unfortunately, many other people waiting for heart, lung, kidney, liver, pancreas or bowel transplants are not as fortunate.

In March of 1993, 824 people in Ontario were waiting for organ transplants. However, in all of 1992, only 510 transplants were actually performed in the province according to the Multiple Organ Retrieval and Exchange Program of Toronto.

The problem is simple. There is a shortage of donors. While statistics show that most people are in favour of donating their organs, large scale donation is not happening.

"People aren't signing driver's licences or organ donor cards", Mr. Young said. "They don't like to think about dying and they don't

realize how successful organ transplant can be."

Scott Young is now active in more than sports. As a member of the Lung Association he does a great deal of public speaking about the need to plan organ donation and to make those plans known. He also speaks to health care professionals and stresses the importance of the difficult job of approaching each potential donor's family for consent to donate.

Organ donation is, as Scott Young puts it, "an incredible gift".

