



LOCAL

Kidney 'nice present' for alderman

By KAREN LONG - klong@kcchronicle.com

GENEVA – First Ward Alderman Chuck Brown received the retirement gift of a lifetime.

Brown, a physicist who recently reduced his hours at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, got a new kidney June 12.

"I'm doing fine; I'm doing wonderful considering it was just a week ago I got a new kidney," he said Tuesday. "I had just turned 66, and I had just taken phased retirement, so this was a nice present."

He returned home from Chicago's Rush University Medical Center on Sunday.

Until his surgery, Brown had been one of more than 4,700 Illinois residents waiting for organs, according to the Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network. Nationally, more than 96,000 people are on waiting lists.

"You wait so long," he said. "You think it will never happen."

A 1st Ward alderman since 1996 and a 4th Ward alderman from 1987 to 1992, Brown suffered from the genetic disorder polycystic kidney disease.

According to the National Institutes of Health, the disease is characterized by the growth of several cysts in the kidneys. The cysts can take up so much space that they reduce kidney function and lead to kidney failure.

The alderman was on peritoneal dialysis, which required 35- to 40-minute treatments four times a day. He had been on dialysis, and the organ transplant waiting list, for almost two years and four months.

"When you're on dialysis, you have to figure out how to fit your dialysis in," he said. Now, "I can attend a lecture at the lab at lunch and not have to worry how I'm going to fit my dialysis in."

Brown's wife of 40 years, Mary Kay, said the call about the transplant came about 8:20 a.m. June 11 while her husband was completing dialysis.

"It was great news," said Mary Kay Brown, 65. "Ever since he had to go on dialysis, we've taken each day. You just hope and pray there will be a transplant, a chance for a transplant."

She said they didn't know much about the kidney donor, other than it came from a 40-year-old Florida woman who was brain dead and was a perfect match.

"I think of [her] family every day," Mary Kay Brown said. "They'll always be in my thoughts and prayers."

Chuck Brown now has three kidneys, including his own pair, which function at about 10 percent of their original capabilities. To give back to the modern medicine that helped give him a new kidney, he is participating in a double-blind study of anti-rejection medicines.

More than 2 million Illinois residents are registered as organ donors through the first-person consent registry that began Jan. 1, 2006, said Beth Kaufman, spokeswoman for the Illinois secretary of state's office. More than 6 million people had signed up on the previous registry that required family consent for organ donation, she said.

Brown stressed the importance of signing up as an organ donor through the organizations such as the Illinois secretary of state's office or the Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network.

"It's more than the gift of hope," he said. "It's the gift of life."

COMMENTS

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donatelife wrote on **Jun 20, 2007 8:30 AM:**

" What a fantastic story. It's great to hear Alderman Brown is doing well and his story is truly a testament to the power of organ donation. As noted, it is critically important that Illinois residents take a moment to RE-REGISTER post Jan. 1, 2006 in the state's new organ/tissue donor registry to ensure your wishes to be a donor are carried out. The new registry is going to help save hundreds of more lives, just like Alderman Brown's. I encourage all Illinois residents to please visit www.IAmAreYou.org today to register in the state's new registry and help save the lives of those waiting for a second chance. - Scott M. Donate Life Illinois - Campaign Manager "