

## Teen receives double-lung transplant

by Colleen Sheehan  
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Leslee Mayer, of McCutcheon Insurance in Mokena, has had to watch her son struggle to breathe since he was seven years old, but that has come to a sudden halt now that he has gone through a double-lung transplant.

Joe Mayer, 19, went on TV and asked millions of Americans to join the First-Person Consent Organ/Tissue Donor Registry in 2006 wearing an oxygen mask to help him breathe due to his complications with cystic fibrosis.

In October 2007, he is oxygen mask free and moves around without problems after a double lung transplant on Sept. 6. "I feel great," said Mayer. "I still get a little tired because my lung function isn't up yet, but I'll get there."

In January 2006, Jesse White, Illinois Secretary of State launched the First-Person Consent Registry, which makes a person's wishes to be a donor legally binding. Jesse White called Loyola looking for a young patient who was on the donor list and Mayer was first on his doctor's mind when it came to an outgoing patient who was waiting for a lung transplant, said his mom, Leslee Mayer.

"His current doctor even said we would like to use him to promote the Gift of Hope Program because he is so well spoken and easy to talk to," said Leslee.

"With my experience with Joe I've learned he is a great guy. We're happy to help him," said the transplant doctor, Dr. Joe Gagermeier. "He has a great personality and is well-liked by all the doctors and nurses."

Leslee said he was not able to take part in the new commercial because he was in and out of hospitals almost every day.

"When I was 18, I was only able to make it to my first four classes," said Joe. "I was just in the hospital non-stop."

Joe said he was not sure about doing a commercial when he was asked about it because not many people knew the reason for his oxygen. "I was uncomfortable talking about it," he said. "But I saw the commercial as a great way to explain it. It was like coming out with my secret."

"Even when he was sick and in the hospital more than home he maintained a fantastic attitude. I think that is a great attribute since he was so sick," added Gagermeier.

He graduated from Lincoln-Way Central in 2006 and became progressively sick this past summer.

Now he hopes to get on with his life. "I want to catch up on everything I missed out on and I hope to go to University of Illinois."

He says he knows he will have to stay sheltered and will stay tired for the next few months but he feels better almost every day.

According to Gagermeier there is an 80 to 90 percent chance of survival and Joe seems to be out of the woods now. Joe visits the doctor weekly and will begin visiting monthly in a few months.

"His positive attitude will help him post-operatively because it will be a long struggle," said Gagermeier.

Thirty to 40 percent of lung transplants are double-lung transplants.