



# NEWSLETTER

Spring 2023

## BREATHING NEW LIFE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Joe Stackhouse – President  
Lori Kimm – Vice President  
Deb Vreeman – Treasurer  
Patty Wagner – Secretary  
Laura O’Mara – Communications  
Gary Grev – Director  
Tammi Holets – Director  
Lisa Stackhouse – Director

## HOW TO CONTACT BREATHING NEW LIFE

Contact the board with ideas, concerns, or questions via email:

[info@breathingnewlife.org](mailto:info@breathingnewlife.org)

Or write to us at:

BREATHING NEW LIFE  
6417 PENN AVE S  
STE 8 – 1210  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55423-1196

## VISIT OUR WEBSITE

Click here: [Breathing New Life](#)

## HELLO SPRING!

**BREATHING NEW LIFE** (BNL) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization comprised entirely of volunteers who are patients or are friends or family members of patients who have had, or are waiting for, lung transplants at the M Health Fairview UMMC. While the underlying diseases vary, we or our loved ones have each experienced an end-stage prognosis requiring a life-saving lung transplant. Many of the directors on the Breathing New Life Board are lung-transplant recipients and share the desire to give back to the lung-transplant community.

**WHILE** we are active in the transplant support group hosted by the M Health Fairview social workers, Breathing New Life is a separate organization.

**OUR MISSION:** To educate and support M Health Fairview lung-transplant patients and their families, and to promote public awareness of transplant-related needs, so we may ease the financial burden of those patients most in need of assistance.

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# APRIL IS NATIONAL DONATE LIFE MONTH!

**National Donate Life Month (NDLM)** was established by Donate Life America and its partnering organizations in 2003. Observed in April each year, National Donate Life Month helps raise awareness about donation, encourages Americans to [register as organ, eye and tissue donors](#) and honors those who have saved lives through the gift of donation.



For National Donate Life Month (NDLM) 2023, Donate Life America was inspired by the natural world of a pond coming to life in the spring.

Frogs (and toads!) are a sign of healing and renewal, and water lilies represent hope. The lily pads we see on the surface of a pond are part of a much larger plant rooted below the water. The water lily plant reminds us of the support and collaboration needed for hope to bloom.

This National Donate Life Month, Donate Life America asks you to be a part of this interconnected life-sustaining community by [registering as an organ, eye and tissue donor](#); becoming educated about living donation; and championing the Donate Life cause.

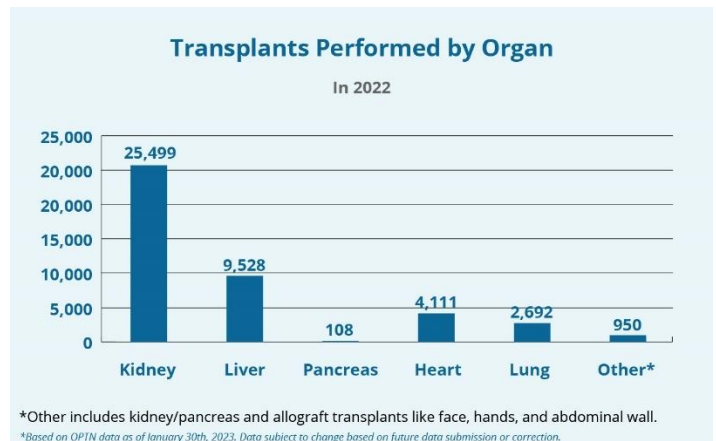
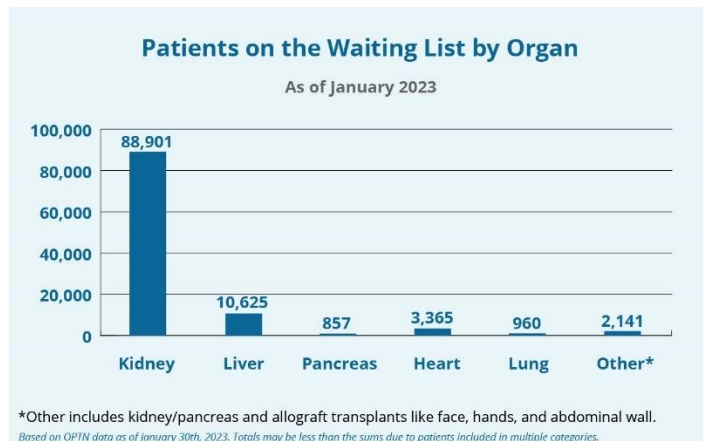


Be sure you are decked out in BLUE & GREEN attire on **Friday, April 14<sup>th</sup>**, which is **National Donate Life Blue & Green Day**, to show your support for the Donate Life message and promote the importance of organ donation!



## ORGAN DONATION STATISTICS\*

- 104,234 men, women and children on the national transplant waiting list.
- 17 people die each day waiting for a transplant.
- Every 10 minutes, another person is added to the transplant waiting list.
- Every donor can save up to 8 lives and enhance 75 more.
- The oldest recorded organ donor in United States history was 95 years old.
- 42,000+ transplants were performed in 2022.



# SUPPORT GROUP INFORMATION

M Health Fairview UMMC lung transplant social workers host weekly patient/caregiver and monthly caregivers-only support groups.

Weekly Patient/Caregiver Support Group	Monthly Caregivers-only Support Group				
<p>The Lung Transplant Support Group meets virtually (via Zoom) once a week on Mondays from 11:00 am – Noon CT.</p> <p>If you would like information about how to join the zoom meeting, please contact:</p> <p><b>Marget Schmidke, LICSW</b>  <a href="mailto:Marget.Schmidtke@fairview.org">Marget.Schmidtke@fairview.org</a> or <a href="tel:612-273-5796">612-273-5796</a></p> <p><b>Liz Herman, LICSW</b>  <a href="mailto:Liz.Herman@fairview.org">Liz.Herman@fairview.org</a> or <a href="tel:612-273-4579">612-273-4579</a></p> <p>Weekly Lung Transplant Support Group is open to all patients and their caregivers who are being evaluated for, have been listed for, or have received a lung transplant at M Health Fairview UMMC.</p> <p>The Lung Transplant Support Group offers the opportunity for patients and caregivers to learn about transplantation firsthand from others who have been on this journey. It is a safe and confidential forum to ask questions, share experiences and feelings related to transplant. People in the group who have shared experiences often develop close bonds with one another.</p>	<p>Caregivers-only Support Group meets virtually (via Zoom) on the first Monday of every month from 6:00pm - 7:00pm.</p> <p>If you would like information about how to join the zoom meeting, please contact:</p> <p><b>Marget Schmidke, LICSW -</b>  <a href="mailto:Marget.Schmidtke@fairview.org">Marget.Schmidtke@fairview.org</a> or <a href="tel:612-273-5796">612-273-5796</a></p> <p><b>Liz Herman, LICSW</b>  <a href="mailto:Liz.Herman@fairview.org">Liz.Herman@fairview.org</a> or <a href="tel:612-273-4579">612-273-4579</a></p> <p>Monthly Caregivers-only Support Group is offered on the first Monday of each Month and is specifically for Caregivers ONLY. This is a safe place for caregivers to share feelings, ask questions, support one another as you care for your loved ones.</p> <tr> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="808 961 1531 1020" style="text-align: center;"><b>Monday Holidays</b></th> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="808 1020 1531 1253"> <p>Support Group(s) will not be held on these dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 29, 2023 - Memorial Day</li> <li>• September 4, 2023 - Labor Day</li> <li>• December 25, 2023 - Christmas Day</li> <li>• January 1, 2024 - New Year's Day</li> </ul> </td> </tr>	<b>Monday Holidays</b>		<p>Support Group(s) will not be held on these dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 29, 2023 - Memorial Day</li> <li>• September 4, 2023 - Labor Day</li> <li>• December 25, 2023 - Christmas Day</li> <li>• January 1, 2024 - New Year's Day</li> </ul>	
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**ALERT! APRIL 17<sup>th</sup> Support Group Meeting  
 Special Guests from LifeSource will be attending**

On Monday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, representatives from our local organ-procurement organization, LifeSource, will join us for an educational opportunity during the regular Zoom support group. Donor family advocates, Jill Halimi, Heather Schmitt and Carrie Hurkes, Ambassador Coordinator, Teresa Turner and hospital Liaison, Grant Redstone, along with a donor family representative will join us to share their LifeSource experience.

Please plan to join us via Zoom on Monday, April 17<sup>th</sup> from 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. to learn about the organ donation process, the donor family experience and LifeSource’s ambassador program!





Patient Name	Transplant Date	Years Post Transplant	Type
Christina Schlemmer Kreeger	April 10, 2022	1	Double
Harriette Wock	April 11, 2006	17	Double
Shannon Mohn	April 22, 2019	4	Double
Angie Theisen	April 26, 2021	2	Double
Steve Anderson	May 1 2022	1	Double
Keith McLain	May 6, 2018	5	Double
Kathy Austad	May 7, 2015	8	Single
Gary Heintz	May 10, 2019	4	Double
Margaret Bakker	May 19, 2018	5	Double
Jesse Rouse	May 20, 2020	3	Double
Cheryl Heitkamp	May 31, 2017	6	Double
Larry Knutson	June 1, 2015	8	Double
James Alan Muehlbauer	June 13, 2021	2	Double

### HELP US CELEBRATE YOU TOO!

*To be recognized in future Breathing New Life newsletters, provide your transplant information by using this link to our database: [BNL Database](#)*

**NOTE: You must choose the option that grants permission to Breathing New Life to recognize your transplant anniversary date in future publications of our newsletter. Due to HIPAA, we are not permitted share patient transplant dates without the patient's permission.**

## A Volunteer's Voice – Hal Wenaas

Hal Wenaas has an impressive volunteer resumé. He spearheads and does most of the legwork for the Breakfast Fundraiser (see page 7 for details) he initiated many years ago to benefit BNL (Hope Chest News or HCN at the time). In addition, he continues to serve as a charter member of the planning committee for the annual BNL Golf Tournament. His philanthropic efforts don't just benefit BNL though; Hal is also a member of the Litchfield Lions Club and takes part in their many civic projects. Hal has gone cold calling in his community and personally raised \$18,000 in donations to support the Breakfast Bag Program which provides bags of granola bars, pudding, etc. to schoolchildren who experience food insufficiency at home.



As a 5-year-old, Hal was diagnosed with asthma, then at age 24 – after many bouts of infections and pneumonia - he was correctly diagnosed with immotile-cilia syndrome (ICS) at Mayo in Rochester. There were only 5 known cases of ICS (now known as primary ciliary dyskinesia (PCD)) in the U.S then. A decade later, Hal was evaluated at the University of MN for a heart-lung transplant but was told he still had too much lung function to be a candidate. So, he returned home to continue managing a Pamida store 60 hours a week. After another decade passed, he underwent a second evaluation at the University of MN to learn his heart was fine, but he did indeed need a double lung transplant. Hal was added to the waitlist in March of 1999 and got his first call in 2000; however, the donor lungs were determined to be unsuitable. He waited an additional 13 months for his second call and received perfect lungs, from a Lincoln, NE college student, on Oct 7, 2001.

Hal's post-transplant recovery was a bumpy road in the early days. He experienced hallucinations, going so far as to pull out his ventilator hose, which caused damage to his esophagus and vocal cords. He was convinced a nurse was holding him hostage in the basement of the hospital. He was hospitalized for 28 days and during that time, his heart rate soared to 216, making a heart ablation necessary to slow his heart rate. His heart even stopped twice! He experienced acute rejection while living in university housing, but large doses of prednisone reversed the rejection, and he was home in Litchfield by Thanksgiving.

But what drives Hal to give so much of his time to help others whom he may not even know? He says he has been so fortunate and blessed in his life; but more importantly, when there were tough times, he remembers the help he and his wife, Mary Jane, received to make it through. He tells the story of their house payment being inadvertently paid twice while he was in the hospital, leaving just \$2.14 in his and Mary Jane's checking account! At that time, the only financial help Marget, UMN social worker, was able to offer was pre-paid phone cards and gift cards for gas.

When he and Mary Jane arrived home, they were greeted by 25-30 people doing yardwork, making repairs to the house, and preparing food. It's those memories of the support he and Mary Jane received, along with the knowledge that "a lot of stuff isn't covered by insurance," that compels him to do what he can to make assistance available to others who need extra help.

Hal fully intended to go back to work at least part-time after his surgery, but his employer, Pamida, told him he needed to work his pre-transplant 60-hour-per-week schedule or nothing. He chose "nothing" to protect his health. Mary Jane, who was still working at the middle school, told him he needed a hobby . . . something other than just golf. (Hal LOVES to golf!) He started baking cookies! He perfected a chocolate-chip & oatmeal cookie and turned it into a money-making venture he dubbed "Hal of a Good Cookie." Word spread and he began getting phone calls with orders for weddings, graduations and other events.

*(Continued on next page.)*

No longer employed and having a flexible schedule, Hal often attended the weekly, in-person support group meetings where he found a mentor and close friend in Marie Anderson, for whom the HCN golf tournament was originally named. Marie encouraged Hal to get involved in volunteering with Second Chance for Life, which then supported both heart and lung transplant patients. Hal is an avid golfer; golf is his thing! Helping coordinate a fundraising golf event was right up his alley!

When HCN was formed in 2003 to support lung transplant patients exclusively, Hal and Marie switched their allegiance and began arranging a golf fundraiser for the newly formed organization. Sadly, Marie passed away in 2005, but Hal carried the torch and has been heavily involved in planning the annual golf tournaments ever since. He serves as the emcee, which includes making introductions and announcing the rules to all the golfers, at the event each year.

He started the breakfast fundraiser in his community of Litchfield not knowing what would become of it. He joined the Eagles and pays the \$30 annual membership, which allows the use of their facilities. He has 13-15 friends who help with it every year and it's gotten bigger and better each year. The Litchfield Chamber of Commerce prints the event posters, which he then personally hangs throughout the town. Hal also does a radio broadcast the week prior to the breakfast encouraging people in the area to attend. The Eagles typically contribute a \$1500 check and Thrivent donates gift cards, which he uses to buy supplies for the event.

He donates all net proceeds to Breathing New Life. This includes the cash donations that accumulate in the fishbowl he sets out, plus sales from 25 dozen of his now-famous "Hal of a Good Cookie" that go for \$6 a dozen at the breakfast. In 2021 and 2022, his Breakfast Fundraiser has cleared approximately \$4,300! Hal feels fortunate to live in a good and generous community.

Hal enjoys raising money for Breathing New Life because it's all volunteer; he knows no one is getting a salary from the organization. He feels rewarded just knowing that he's helping other people with his efforts. He greets everyone who attends the Breakfast Fundraiser to thank them for attending and loves meeting others from the lung-transplant program.

Advice that Hal offers others who may have a fundraising idea – but don't know where to start – is this: "Don't try to do it all alone." He suggests starting with either a local church or civic organization – like the Eagles – and if they would lend their facilities or host to help raise money. Get organized beforehand and then talk to friends or church members, etc. And tell the transplant story; once his church knew about his transplant, members have been behind him wholeheartedly. He estimates half his church comes to his Breakfast Fundraiser, 60 percent of his fellow Lions attend to show their support, and a lot of golfers come to the breakfast too. He also says it helps that he "worked in retail" so he knows a lot of people.

He considers himself so fortunate . . . won the lottery" when he married his wife . . . been given a second chance at life . . . blessed with two children and subsequently four grandchildren (ages ranging from 6 to 18); without a transplant, he never would have experienced the joy of being a grandparent . . . got to meet his donor family 10-11 years ago and stays in touch with them. He attributes his post-transplant longevity (22 years in October) to his "giving back." Yes, Hal Wenaas is a dedicated volunteer for life. He feels needs to give back because of everything he's been given.

*"Volunteering is the very core of being a human.  
No one has made it through life without someone else's help."*

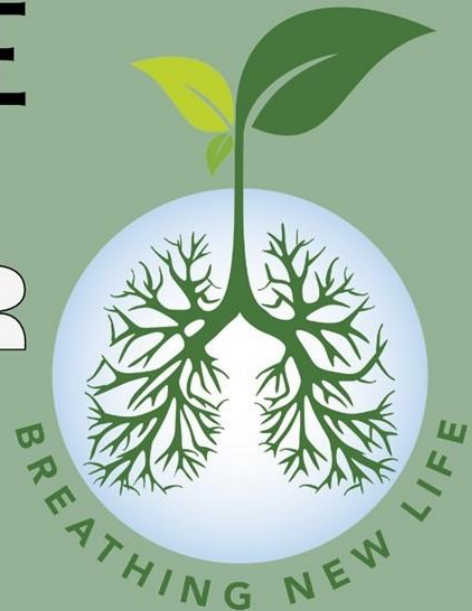
– Heather French Henry

UPCOMING EVENT . . .

# BREATHING NEW LIFE BREAKFAST FUNDRAISER

SUNDAY, APRIL 23  
8:30 AM-12:30 PM

LITCHFIELD EAGLES CLUB



SUPPORTING MHEALTH FAIRVIEW LUNG  
TRANSPLANT PATIENTS & FAMILIES  
*(Formerly Hope Chest News)*

ADULTS \$10 ● AGES 6-11 \$5 ● 5↓ FREE



French Toast, Pancakes,  
Sausage, Juice & Coffee

**ALL YOU CAN EAT**



Hal Wenaas will be celebrating 22 years since his successful double-lung transplant in 2001. Since that date Hal and his friends have been raising money for other patients going through lung transplant.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
VISIT [BREATHINGNEWLIFE.ORG](http://BREATHINGNEWLIFE.ORG)

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDS HAVE BEEN APPLIED FOR THROUGH THRIVENT FINANCIAL FOR LUTHERANS & MEEKER COUNTY CHAPTER #31309

# UPCOMING EVENT . . .



<b>Location</b>	Goodrich Golf Course 1820 Van Dyke St Maplewood, MN 55109 651-748-2525
<b>Schedule</b>	<b>Saturday, July 29, 2023</b> 11:00 a.m. Registration begins 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Lunch 1:00 p.m. – Shotgun Start
<b>Prizes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prizes to the top three teams</li> <li>• Hole-in-One Contest</li> <li>• Putting Contest</li> <li>• Longest Drive</li> <li>• Closest to the Hole</li> </ul>
<b>Golfer Registration</b>	<b>\$125</b> – includes green fees, cart, beverages, lunch and pizza after golfing. <i>Registration fills up quickly – sign up early!</i>
<b>Sponsorships</b>	Gold Level - \$1,000 Silver Level - \$300 Bronze Level - \$100
<b>Additional Sponsorships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BNL logo golf balls</li> <li>• Boxed lunches</li> <li>• Beer keg(s)</li> <li>• Bottled water &amp; soda</li> <li>• Snacks</li> </ul>
<b>Goody Bag Items Needed</b>	Each year we provide our golfers with useful items including snacks, beverages, sunscreen, lip balm, golf tees, ball markers, etc. <i>(Quantities of 144+ please)</i>
<b>Donate Other Prizes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gift cards</li> <li>• Golf rounds</li> <li>• Golf gear</li> <li>• Wine, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Register or Donate Online</b>	<a href="#">BNL 2023 Golf Tournament</a>
<b>Contact Us</b>	<a href="mailto:golf@breathingnewlife.org">golf@breathingnewlife.org</a>
<b>Donate/ Contact BNL by USPS mail</b>	Breathing New Life 6417 Penn Ave S, Ste 8 – 1210 Minneapolis, MN 55423-1196



## OTHER WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT BREATHING NEW LIFE

### Presenting Breathing New Life T-shirts!

**Description:** Gildan SoftStyle® short-sleeved, fitted shirts with the full-color Breathing New Life logo and tagline on the front; our website address is displayed on the back. Our “BNL” initials appear on the sleeve as well.

Front



Back



#### Available Sizes

Small, Medium, Large & XL

2X and 3X

#### Price

\$20

\$22

Initially, shirts will be available for purchase only at in-person fundraising events (e.g., the Breakfast Fundraiser and the Golf Tournament). **The ability to place online orders will be coming soon!**

### Donate in Honor or Memory of a Transplant Patient

If you wish to make a donation in honor or memory of a transplant patient, you may make an online donation by visiting our [Give MN Donation page](#) and using a credit card, PayPal, Venmo or a Giving Card.

If you prefer, you may mail your check to:

Breathing New Life

6417 Penn Ave S

Ste 8 - 1210

Minneapolis, MN 55423-1196



# JOIN OUR BOARD!

## BREATHING NEW LIFE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ANNUAL ELECTION OF OFFICERS

BNL is looking for candidates who are interested in becoming general board members, as well as running for the officer positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.

The BNL Board of Directors will elect officers on **Monday, June 19, 2023**. The BNL Board will accept officer and director nominations until **June 12th, 2023**. Below is a brief, but not all-inclusive, description of each officer's role and responsibilities as well as those of board members:

- President - Ensure that an agenda is distributed prior to each monthly board meeting; preside over board meetings according to accepted rules of order; encourage all members to participate in the discussion; ensure decisions are reached in an orderly, timely and democratic manner; and conduct votes as prescribed in the bylaws.
- Vice-President - Perform the duties of the President, in the event of the absence or disability of the President.
- Secretary - Attend the monthly board meetings and transcribe the minutes of each meeting, distribute the minutes to all board members within two weeks prior to the next board meeting, and maintain the official roster of board members.
- Treasurer - Maintain the financial records of HCN by recording all income (donations) and expenditures, make appropriate deposits and withdrawals to\from the BNL bank account in a timely manner so financial records are kept as current as possible, make a monthly report to the BNL Board of Directors with details of the previous month's financial activity, draft an annual budget for the next year, and file any necessary reports with the state of MN and the IRS.
- Board Members – Participate in monthly board meetings by providing ideas, opinions, taking part in discussions, and voting on items that come before the BNL Board; volunteer to help with special projects or events (e.g., the golf tournament held each July) or brainstorm new ideas for raising funds; serve on ad-hoc committees that come up occasionally to address issues or support needs or new ideas.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

These board positions can be filled by anyone with a commitment to the BNL mission. BNL Board meetings are now held via Zoom in the evening of the third Monday of each month, so there is no longer a need to live locally to the Minneapolis/St Paul metropolitan area. If you are interested in becoming an officer of director on the BNL Board, complete this [Board of Directors Application](#). Or, if you would like more detailed information, email your questions to [info@breathingnewlife.org](mailto:info@breathingnewlife.org).

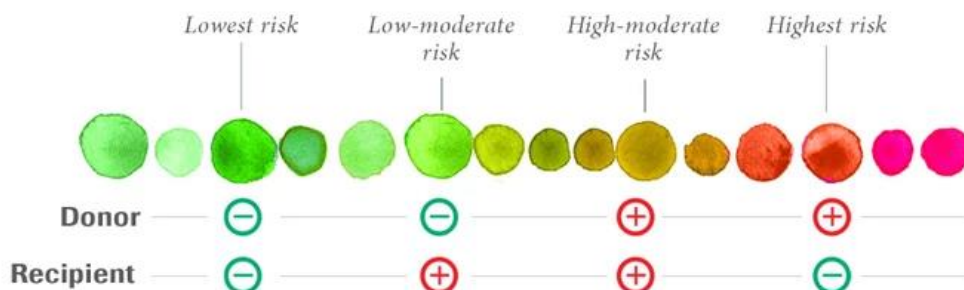
## CYTOMEGALOVIRUS (CMV) and LUNG TRANSPLANTATION

**Cytomegalovirus (CMV)** is common in the general population and is related to the herpes viruses that cause cold sores, chickenpox, and infectious mononucleosis (mono). CMV is spread through close contact with CMV-infected body fluids. Between 50% and 80% of adults in the United States have had a CMV infection by age 40. Once infected, a person's body retains the virus for life, but a healthy immune system usually controls it. Most people are unaware they even have it, or they may develop an illness similar to the common cold or flu. However, in babies and people with weakened immune systems, an infection with CMV can be more serious.

Transplant patients are among those most vulnerable to CMV infection, especially in the critical few months after the transplant. Between 20% and 60% of people with a solid organ transplant develop a symptomatic CMV infection. The primary sources of CMV infection in post-transplant patients are:

- reactivation of previous CMV infection due to stress or suppression of the immune system,
- blood transfusions,
- contact with body fluids of someone with a current CMV infection,
- from the transplanted organ.

Organ transplant patients are tested for CMV before the transplant. The first test may occur a few months before the transplant or after the patient has been placed on the transplant waiting list. When a donor organ becomes available, another CMV test takes place so that the transplant team has the most current information about the patient's CMV status. This pre-transplant test is a blood test that identifies whether the donor or patient receiving the transplant has already been infected with CMV and provides information about the level of potential risk to the recipient from the virus.



The type of transplant also affects the CMV risk – lung, heart and multi-organ transplants carry the highest risk, kidney and stem cell transplants the lowest. Because CMV infection is so common worldwide, healthy people who test positive for CMV can usually still become donors.

Testing for CMV continues after the transplant, but the type of testing changes. Post-transplant patients normally undergo polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing to measure “viral load” – that is, how much CMV is in the body. Post-transplant testing is conducted because, unfortunately, the immunosuppressant therapy patients receive to prevent organ rejection increases the likelihood that the virus could multiply and become symptomatic. To help prevent and minimize this risk, post-transplant patients typically receive prophylactic antiviral therapy such as valganciclovir (Valcyte) or ganciclovir (Cytovene) for six months. These same medications are used to treat an active CMV infection as well.

Symptoms of a CMV infection in post-transplant patients vary. Some may develop serious cases that are difficult to control. Others may have few to no symptoms and only become aware of a CMV infection through results of their post-transplant testing. Regardless, an active case of CMV must be treated. If you are a transplant patient, contact your Nurse Coordinator if you experience:

- a fever, headache, muscle weakness or stomachache,
- nausea or loss of appetite,
- diarrhea,
- feeling mentally cloudy or very tired,
- shortness of breath,
- blurred vision, eye pain or sensitivity to light.

## A Challenging Journey with CMV: Deb Vreeman's Story



Approximately six months after her March 2019 lung transplant, Deb Vreeman began experiencing such severe stomach pain, she couldn't eat and was nauseated. She was hospitalized, endured extensive testing, and was eventually diagnosed with a cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection. Her PCR test revealed her CMV DNA level in her plasma (or viral load) was over 3,000 IU/mL despite taking valganciclovir on a prophylactic basis since her transplant. Deb was CMV-negative prior to her transplant, but unfortunately, she inherited the virus from her donor lungs.

Many post-transplant patients who experience a CMV infection respond well to the antiviral medications, and the virus can be controlled. That wasn't the case for Deb though. Over time, she came to associate the combination of stomach pain, nausea, fatigue, muscle weakness and shortness of breath as familiar indicators that she was having a CMV "flare up." She has been treated with valganciclovir, ganciclovir, foscarnet, and even participated in the research study for maribavir; however, she became resistant to all four medications.

The only available antiviral therapy to which she is not resistant is cidofovir, which caused a whole other set of issues. After two infusions of cidofovir in 2020, she awoke one morning with a headache and extreme pain in her eyes, which had become inflamed. Deb's eyes also developed cataracts, then the outer lining of each became inflamed, requiring her to undergo surgery on both eyes.

At one point, Deb's CMV viral load soared to 75,457 IU/mL! She was feeling extremely ill at that time and there were no more available antivirals to try. Deb recalls, "My CMV became resistant to all the meds, and I was close to dying when my infectious disease doctors found this research study in Cincinnati."

Cincinnati Children's Hospital offers Virus-specific T-cell (VST) therapy as part of research studies, which are open to immunocompromised people who have developed infection with CMV, EBV, ADV, BK or JC viruses. VST therapy is a type of cellular therapy delivered through an intravenous infusion. It contains T-cells, from donated blood, that are engineered to fight the specific virus infecting the patient (CMV in Deb's case).

After Deb joined the study, she and her husband, Scott, made the 11-hour trip from their Rochester, MN home to Cincinnati, OH every 28 days between February 2021 and August 2021. Deb explains the infusion consists of two syringes – each is infused over 1 minute - and then they must wait an hour before leaving the hospital to head back home. The VST therapy takes two weeks to fully take effect.

"It's a long drive," Deb admits, "but it works! I was CMV-negative from August 2021 to October 2022." The T-cells administered to Deb with her first two infusions in 2021 didn't produce the expected results so the researchers tried T-cells from a different donor. Deb has received that second donor's T-cells for all of her infusions since then because the scientists know they work. The only side effect of the VST treatments that Deb has noticed is that shortly afterwards, her body emits an odor that smells like creamed corn!

In October 2022, Deb was hospitalized when her CMV viral load exceeded 7,000 UI/mL. The Vreemans have made additional trips to Cincinnati for additional VST therapy four times: November 2022, January and February 2023, and again in early April. Deb clarifies that the timing of her visits is based on her CMV test results – which are performed weekly – and how she's feeling. If her test results are above 1,000 UI/mL, she must return to making the lengthy journey every 28 days.

While she's not quite out of the woods yet, Deb is grateful for research studies that offer promising therapy options to patients in her situation.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES



**LUNG TRANSPLANT FOUNDATION**  
**Mentorship Program**<sup>®</sup>  
 IN HONOR OF JOSEPH J. CARTER

**FOR PATIENTS  
 AND CAREGIVERS**

The **Lung Transplant Foundation Joseph J. Carter Mentorship Program** was founded to provide support to patients and caregivers throughout the lung transplant process. Their trained mentors are passionate about encouraging those going through a lung transplant to be better able to handle the demands of this journey. Well-supported patients and caregivers lead to greater success for everyone.

If you are interested in learning more about the Lung Transplant Foundation’s Joseph J. Carter Mentorship Program for patients and caregivers, click here to view the brochure: [Mentorship Program Brochure](#)

### **Request a Mentor**

If you are interested in requesting a mentor from the Lung Transplant Foundation’s Mentorship Program, click here to begin: [Request a Mentor](#).

### **Become a Mentor**

If you are interested in becoming a mentor for the Lung Transplant Foundation’s Mentorship Program, click here to begin: [Become a Mentor](#).

### **WEBSITE LINKS**

- [HealthWell Foundation \(medication expense assistance\)](#)
- [Wilder Caregiver Support and Resources](#)
- [LifeSource](#)
- [Alpha-1 Foundation](#)
- [COPD Foundation](#)
- [Cystic Fibrosis Foundation](#)
- [Cystic Fibrosis Research Institute](#)
- [Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation](#)

### **FACEBOOK GROUP LINKS**

- [Minneapolis MN Lung Transplant Support Group](#)
- [Lung Transplantation Taking Flight with New Life](#)
- [CF Lung Transplantees](#)
- [Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency Support](#)
- [COPD Support Group](#)
- [Cystic Fibrosis Community](#)
- [Pulmonary Fibrosis Information by Breathe Support](#)
- [Ultimate Pulmonary Wellness](#)

### **DONATE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT**

[Global Health Ministries](#) located at 7831 Hickory St NE, Fridley, MN 55432 would welcome your gently used medical equipment and supplies that you no longer need. GHM cannot take medications or items with an expiration date that is less than a year out. Call 763-586-9590 if you have supplies or medical equipment you would like to donate.

# JUST FOR FUN!

## Five Tips for Bringing More Laughter into Your Life

You may have heard that old saying, “Laughter is the best medicine.” Laughter may not be on your self-care to-do list, but it’s good for your mood, mental health, heart health, and more. Here’s how to bring more giggles and chuckles into your every day.

### 1. Don’t Worry About Being ‘Funny’

The comedian, Paul Osincup, says you don’t have to be a comedian to laugh more. “Humor is not a talent, it’s a habit,” he says. He suggests not worrying so much about being clever or funny, but instead get in the habit of seeing the humor in everyday situations. For example, if you spill your coffee, laugh about it with whomever you’re with. Here are two lines Osincup loves to use: “Now that I have your attention ...” or “It’s just half and half: Half on the table, half on my lap.”

### 2. Curate Your Comedy Collection

“Doomscrolling” — a trendy name for the tendency to consume endless negative news — may be a habit you’ve adopted, but you can change that habit. Instead, surround yourself with more humorous content.

Osincup suggests going on social media and following and liking as many pages as possible that make you laugh, “so humor will show up more often in your feeds.” You can also use the website and app Podchaser, where you can personalize your feed to watch for when your favorite funny people are guests on podcasts or release a new episode.

### 3. Take a Laugh Break

Set an alarm on your phone for a “fun break,” says Osincup. Start off with five minutes, Osincup recommends. Watch something funny (like a video on YouTube or quick clip of something from late-night TV) and then set a second alarm that cues you to go back to work.

### 4. Try the ‘3 Funny Things’ Exercise

You’ve heard of the power of a gratitude journal, in which you write down three (or more) good things that happened that day. A humor journal might be just as impactful. “A humor journal trains you to see humor in real time,” Osincup says.

### 5. Don’t Be Afraid to Lighten Up

It’s critical to be able to laugh at yourself. Laughing at yourself helps you put mistakes in perspective, deal with hardships, and move past misfortunes. When something happens that’s mildly stressful and you react by being short with someone or stressed out, reflect on how you could have handled that with more humor or lightheartedness.

If laughing is challenging for you or you’re struggling with a more severe mood disorder or mental illness, it’s best to seek professional help from a therapist or your doctor.



*Source: Excerpted from March 9, 2023, EveryDay Health article “How to Laugh More Every Single Day – and Why It’s So Good for You” by Jessica Migala*



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*By the time you receive this, I hope all the snow has finally melted and we can get outside. Lisa and I are not much into winter sports so the winters can get long for us.*

*At our February BNL Board of Directors' meeting, we were feeling particularly ambitious in developing our goals for 2023. At our March meeting, we started the more difficult task of determining our next steps to accomplish the goals. The key message when looking at all five of our goals for 2023 is that we ALL must pitch in, and we will need plenty of volunteers.*

- **Hold an additional, new fundraiser** – We love the events we have and believe we would benefit from an additional event that we hope to grow over time. While not completely decided, we are looking at adding an annual walk in the fall as a possibility.
- **Develop a roster of potential volunteers.** We need volunteers whether it is for another fundraiser, sports event, or committee. We are currently working on a form to be used if you are interested in signing up for our volunteer list. Coming soon so stay tuned!
- **Increase the number of BNL mailing-list subscribers to 400.** – Please help us gain additional subscribers. Please direct your friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers to [Subscribe to BNL Communications](#) and ask them to register.
- **Partner with a corporate sponsor to assist with future fundraising.** If you know of someone at an organization that may be interested in being a corporate sponsor for one of our events, please have them contact me at [joe@joestackhouse.com](mailto:joe@joestackhouse.com).
- **Revisit mission statement, vision statement and determine 5-year plan.** – In the coming months, we will be challenging ourselves to look ahead 5 years and create some clarity on where we want to be.

*I very much appreciate the privilege of being part of a team that supports those on their lung transplant journey at the University of Minnesota.*

*Enjoy the spring flowers!*

*Joe Stackhouse*

President  
Breathing New Life