

# Kidney Transplant Gives Farm Wife New Lease On Life

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LITITZ (Lancaster Co.)—Faye Myer has a new lease on life.

"I wouldn't be here," she said, "if it weren't for receiving a kidney."

A farm wife, Faye always ate a nutritious diet, stayed within her weight range, and maintained a healthy lifestyle. Normally energetic, Faye was nonplussed when she felt a constant nagging fatigue about five years ago.

At first, the doctor diagnosed high blood pressure, but all efforts to lower it proved fruitless. Puzzled, the doctor ordered extensive testing about two years after she began doctoring.

That's when the diagnosis was made that Faye had two diseased kidneys.

"They do not know what caused it," Faye said. "It's possible high blood pressure caused it; on the other hand, the high blood pressure might have been the result of diseased kidneys."

For almost a year after the diagnosis, Faye was able to live a fairly normal life by taking medication and resting often. But it was scary to know that she was expected to become very ill before losing complete function in both kidneys. Blood tests were taken every week to monitor levels.

In January 1995, Faye needed to

undergo a hysterectomy. Doctors were alarmed because the anesthesia is considered poison to diseased kidneys and a complete shut down was expected.

Although tests showed the numbers were on a downward slide, doctors approved a tour to the Holy Lands that Faye and her husband Jim were scheduled to lead. Jim combines farming with pastoring at White Oak Church of the Brethren and with traveling evangelism.

Their suitcases were packed. But one week before their scheduled departure, Faye received the fateful call.

"Everything came crashing down then. The blood results showed severe damage," Faye said. That was in March 1995.

Despite her pleas to participate in the planned tour because she was feeling fine, the doctor forewarned her that she was going to get extremely sick and that she absolutely should not leave the country.

The doctor's predictions were accurate. A week later, Faye became seriously ill. She underwent an operation to have a catheter inserted in her stomach in preparation for peritoneal dialysis. Nightly, she hooked up to the dialysis machine for eight hours of cleansing.

Faye's name was added to a list

for kidney transplants. She was number 250, and told that it would probably take one to two years before a match could be found.

About three months after her name was placed on the list, Faye received a phone call that a kidney was available that was a close match to hers.

"You are number two on the list. Pack your bags and be ready to come," she was told by the Hershey Medical Center.

The Myers were just ready to go out to eat with friends. They placed the beeper and a mobile phone under the table in the restaurant when the call came.

The kidney had gone to someone else.

The news was discouraging. Also discouraging was the nauseous feeling that plagued her. Thinking there could be another problem, the doctor arranged an appointment with a specialist. Before the scheduled appointment, Faye received another call when she and her husband were visiting at her daughter's home for Sunday dinner.

This time, she was told a perfect match was found. The kidney was from a 14-year-old boy who had been killed in an accident in Oklahoma.

The kidney, packed in ice, was being flown to Hershey and the operation was to begin between one and 2 a.m., Faye was told.

The Myers were ecstatic. A perfect match is extremely rare. The closer the match, the greater the chance that the transplant will not be rejected.

Jim and Faye went to Hershey Medical Center immediately. Preparations for the operation were made and fluids drained from her. But the scheduled time for the operation passed and the family became alarmed that something may have gone wrong. But at 8 a.m. on Oct 9, 1995, doctors began the operation that lasted until 2 a.m. the following morning.

Although Faye felt extremely sick for several days, she was told that the minute the kidney was in place, it started working, which is considered unusual.

Although she still felt ill, Faye was sent home from the hospital the following Sunday after the operation. For a few weeks she battled depression, no doubt a side effect of the operation, but she continued to grow stronger.

Today Faye mostly feels like her perky self.

"I need to rest more often, but many people tell me that tiring more easily is typical of my age," Faye said. She is 57.

She and her husband Jim have four married children and 10 grandchildren. She often babysits the grandchildren and entertains family and friends.

Jim and Faye recently moved from their large farm that bordered Speedwell Lake to one of their smaller farms a mile to the east. The Myers crop farm and raise steers. A son took over the larger family farm.

Faye enjoys cooking, baking, entertaining, counted cross stitch, reading, and working in flower beds.

As is standard practice, Faye was put on anti-rejection medicine that she will need to continue for the rest of her life. She needs to swallow 19 pills daily. The medicine has unpleasant side effects — hair growth, weight gain, and puff-



Before Faye needed a kidney transplant, she could not fathom the joy that organ donations bring to others. Now she is strong supporter of organ donation.

iness in the face. At first, it seemed overwhelming to count out all the pills, but now Faye has a regular regime and considers it part of her daily duties.

While the side effects of the medicine are unpleasant, Faye says cheerily, "It's the price that I pay to live."

Since her kidney transplants, new medicines have been developed with less side effects. But doctors are reluctant to change her medicine since she is doing so well medically. Switching medicines now could cause medical problems.

"The support of my family and friends has really been important throughout this," Faye said. "Above all I thank the Lord. I think it's really a miracle how everything worked out so well."

Every three months, Faye returns to Hershey Medical Center for a checkup, and she sees a kidney specialist monthly.

"The numbers have always been excellent," Faye said of the calculations that reflect kidney function.

"The transplant has really given me a new lease on life. Some people ask me if it's really worth the pain of the operation. It definitely is. I have a really good life compared to depending on dialysis."

Faye doesn't know the name of the family of the 14-year-old donor, but she was able to write a letter of thanks to be passed on to the family.

"It's wonderful that people donate their organs. It's something that never entered my mind until I needed one," Faye said.

Now she herself plans to donate her organs.

The need for donor organs is urgent. According to the Dept. of Health, especially needed are eyes, kidneys, hearts, livers, lungs, pancreata, ear bones, ear drums, other bones, and skin.

You can give someone else life by donating an organ or other tissues after death to those who are critically ill and in need of a transplant. If you prefer, you can donate your entire body for medical educational purposes. Donation of the body is not necessary, however, in order to donate specific organs and tissues.

Each time you renew your driver's license, you will be asked if

you want the "Organ Donor" designation on your license.

The words will be permanently placed on the driver's license when you say "yes."

Previously issued licenses will remain valid until its expiration dates and may be used with an "Organ Donor" sticker available from the Pa. Dept. of Health or by calling 1-800-692-7254.

After indicating your wishes as a donor, you must sign the card in the presence of two witnesses, who then must sign the card in your presence. Witnesses do not need to be family members but they must be 18 years or older.

In specifying your donation on the card, if you check (A), any needed organs or tissues, it means that any organs and tissues needed at the time of your death may be removed for transplantation. Your body will be returned to your family for services and burial.

If you check (B), only the organs or tissues specified, then only the organs you check in the boxes on the list will be donated. Your body will be returned to your family for services or burial.

If you check (C), "my body for anatomical study," you are indicating your desire to donate your entire body for medical research and educational purposes.

Contact Humanity Gifts Registry for additional information at 130 S. 9th St., Suite 1550, P.O. Box 835, Philadelphia, PA 19105-0835 or call (215) 922-4440.

Next-of-kin can also donate the body or organs if the deceased did not sign a donor card.

By the time a will is read, it is too late to make use of donated organs or tissues. Make sure your next-of-kin and physician are aware of your wishes.

A history of poor health does not rule out organ donation. A complete medical assessment will be made at the time of death. This will reveal those tissues and organs that are acceptable.

No additional costs are incurred by organ donations. Neither are payments made to the donor's heirs.

To find more out about transplants, call 1-800-893-1995. The web site address is [www.ktppp.com](http://www.ktppp.com).



After the successful kidney transplant Jim and Faye Myer built a home on their farm. Although this was exciting, Faye finds pleasure in ordinary happenings such as birds singing and flowers growing. "It's like getting a new lease on life," she said.