



Kidney donor

By Cindy Beachum

I have known Theresa Kloet for several years as a mutual member of Fruitport Christian Reformed Church. We would speak politely to each other, but never really were very close friends. I have always liked Theresa, but we just never got to know each other very well. For years I didn't even know she had cystic fibrosis.

Through the years, as her disease progressed to the point that she needed a lung transplant, I have always admired Theresa. When her body rejected the first lung transplant and she needed to go through another, I feared that she would not survive. What I admired most was that through her pain and medical complications, Theresa always seemed to be so strong in her faith. Sometimes it just doesn't seem fair that one person has so many medical problems through their whole life. But I have never seen Theresa complain or give up. I know she relies on God to help her through all of the tough times.

In September of 2009, I was sitting in church on a Sunday morning when Pastor Bob informed us that Theresa's kidneys were beginning to fail and she would need a kidney transplant in the near future. He said that a potential donor would need to be: 1. in good health, 2. type A positive blood, and 3. someone in their early fifties or younger. I instantly felt butterflies in my stomach. I met all three criteria and felt so fortunate to have had such good health. I wanted to raise my hand right then and say, "I'll do it!" This would be a way that I could possibly help Theresa. I also thought that this would be a concrete example to my children of what my faith means to me.

On the way home from church, I informed my husband about what I wanted to do. I couldn't stop thinking about it. Several times that day I wanted to call Theresa, but felt "chicken." Finally, that same night, I called. This

was the beginning of a journey and I really had no idea how to proceed or what the future would hold.

We thought that a transplant would happen fairly soon, but due to Theresa's health and the approval from her medical insurance, it seemed like nothing was progressing for a long time. I told Theresa to let me know when I should take the next step.

Finally, in March of 2011, she gave me the phone number of her kidney transplant coordinator and told me I could call her and discuss more about what this might mean for me. What Theresa did not know was that after some discussion and questioning, the coordinator would give me instructions on how to get tested to see if I was a match.

So I quietly went to the local lab, had my blood drawn, nervously packaged it up and drove to Federal Express to mail it to the University of Wisconsin where Theresa had had her lung transplant. I prayed over those vials of blood before they were sent off, and at the same time was very nervous. In some ways, I did not want to be a match so that I wouldn't have to make that decision. (Don't we always want the easy way out?)

About two weeks later, I got the call from the transplant coordinator that I was indeed a very good match. I had to force myself to take some time to pray and think to be sure I really wanted to go through with this. Reality was beginning to set in.

This type of surgery needs to be scheduled (when possible) six to eight weeks in advance. Theresa and I were fortunate that we could decide if we would proceed as soon as possible or wait a couple of months. She felt like she was feeling well enough to wait until after summer, so surgery was set for September 14, 2011. At that point I was scheduled for further testing to make sure I was indeed healthy enough to donate my kidney to Theresa.

At first I didn't want anyone to know about what I wanted to do, mostly because I didn't want to do this for attention reasons. My motives were more about helping someone in such dire need and being grateful that I could do something concrete. But I began to realize that by sharing my story maybe I could influence and encourage others, not necessarily to donate an organ, but to do whatever one can to help another in need.

It is so great to see Theresa living her life again, including the joy she gets from playing her flute in church and with a local orchestra. Needless to say, we have grown a lot closer through this experience.

I never look at Theresa and think about "my" kidney being in her body because it is no longer mine. I am so thankful that this has turned out so well. The surgery was a little more than I had anticipated, but I would do it again in a second.

I am so thankful for our families, our church family, and the many friends who lifted us up in prayer through this whole journey. We never would have made it without their prayers and God's presence in our lives. •

Kidney recipient

By Theresa Kloet

My whole kidney transplant process went so much better than I could have imagined. I'm no stranger to organ transplants, as back in January 2001, I underwent a double lung transplant at the University of Wisconsin. Seven months later, the lungs were rejected and by God's grace and His miraculous hand, I received my second double lung transplant in September 2001. I was born with Cystic Fibrosis. Though I still have the disease, along with Type 1 diabetes, GERD, severe osteoporosis, the many medications needed for a lifetime eventually caused kidney failure disease. About four years ago, it got pretty severe, and kidney transplantation would be my only option for survival.

I can't go on further without first mentioning the wonderful church family my husband Ken and I have. As members of Fruitport Christian Reformed Church, we have been faithfully prayed for, supported, cared for, loved, and encouraged through all of my health concerns. Our faith and personal relationship with Jesus Christ has sustained us to keep moving forward, to have hope, and to know and believe in a reason to keep living and for still being here. Our church family has been there for us all the time. My physical body has been through many traumatic experiences with sickness, surgeries due to organ transplants, two hip and thigh fractures, a hip replacement, many medications and the sometimes-nasty side effects. But without the spiritual wholeness of belonging to God and belonging to a body of believers, life would be so meaningless. And this is exactly where I found my kidney donor.

Approximately four years ago, my doctors said it was time to start looking for a "live" donor. With all my health issues, a kidney from a living person would be more successful. We had to get the word out to friends and family of my need. This was very difficult and I wondered how to go about asking someone to give me his or her kidney.

The blood type had to match mine. The person couldn't be over 60 and could have no health issues or past/present substance abuse/use — especially with smoking and alcohol. So, word got out to many people and I also stood before our church family and spelled

out the need. We all held hands, and everyone gathered around us to pray for God's will and wisdom. Only days passed when I got a call from two women from our church, both saying their hearts were beating wildly and a strange feeling come over them that they "knew" they were the ones.

So then began the long ordeal of many tests to see whether they'd be a match to me and we were told upfront that most do not pass the final, rigorous tests that the transplant hospital team puts them and myself through. Insurance issues also added a lot of time of waiting. But these two women took it upon themselves to get moving and get it all done. They both demonstrated such love and courage for my sake, so I could live and have better health again. Through prayer and faith, I was also able to stay off of dialysis, despite the fact that my kidneys were only working at about 8 to 10 percent. That, too, was a miracle, as I wouldn't have lived long on that.

So, who are these two remarkable women? Cindy Beachum and Marge Venema. And I really did know that one of them would be my donor. They were the only ones who came forward out of the many, many others. My dad is my blood type, but age was the factor for his not being able to give. My parents so wanted to help. But after Cindy and Marge said yes, I felt at peace, let it go, and stopped talking about needing a donor.

They both went through all the tests. Cindy was the first to go to the University of Wisconsin for the final tests. Up to that time, both Marge and Cindy were matches. Cindy's tests from the University of Wisconsin were all cleared. So amazing and such a miracle that I had two people as matches! Very unusual and unheard of. But we knew God's hand was in all this and His outcome and will was best for me. When Cindy cleared all her tests, Marge no longer needed to go to the University of Wisconsin. Very quickly a surgery date of September 14, 2011 was set.

I have so much love and admiration for the two women and their families who thought it through, prayed about it, and still said they wanted to donate. That's genuine love and friendship. And when you have people all in the same likeness of Christian fellowship and striving to live stronger, better lives influenced by God's teachings, there's no stronger bond than that!

Concerts scheduled at Christian Reformed Conference Grounds

(Submitted by Christian Reformed Conference Grounds)

The Christian Reformed Conference Grounds, 12253 Lakeshore Drive in Grand Haven presents a "free will offering" concert series during the summer months. Concerts begin at 7 p.m. in their 1000 seat auditorium.

May 28	Voices of Victory
June 23	The Matthews Brothers
June 30	Glorybound Quartet
July 4	Voices for Freedom
July 14	The Heralders Quartet
July 21	Evergreen Chorale
July 28	King's Brass
August 4	Hope Heralds
August 11	The Overtones
August 18	Talley Trio
August 25	The Staffmen Quartet
September 8	The Singing Hims

Women's Summer Breakway to be held in July at Maranatha

(Courtesy, Maranatha Bible and Missionary Conference)

The annual Women's Breakaway at Maranatha Bible and Missionary Conference is scheduled for July 24 and 25, 2012. The two identical days are filled with wonderful music, inspiration, and the opportunity to enjoy the beautiful grounds and relax as you break away from your routine. Registration is \$25, and includes lunch.

This year's featured speaker is Carol Kent, well-known author and international public speaker. Also on the program is Stacey Smith, former inmate of the Arkansas Department of corrections, now serving as chaplain where she was once incarcerated.

Each day begins at 9 a.m. with registration. The program begins at 9:30 a.m. and ends around 3:30 p.m. Choose your favorite day, and plan to attend the women's summer breakaway. And invite a friend or two!

Early bird tickets are available now for a limited time at just \$20 (a \$5 savings!) online, by phone, or at the conference center.

For more information, visit vacationwithpurpose.org or call (231) 798-2161. •

God was with those doctors, surgeons and the whole transplant team when Cindy and I and our husbands, Rick and Ken, all met that morning of September 14 while waiting to be wheeled into separate surgery rooms. It was a very unique and special feeling knowing that she and her family had decided together that her perfectly healthy and working kidney would be taken out of her body and put into mine to give me a new and better life. She gave me life. And God used that situation in a remarkable way. We all had the usual doubts, fears, and questions; yet the faith to know that when God chooses something for our lives, it is for good. You have that peace, that hope. The surgery was not the easiest, nor was the recovery time easy for the two of us. Our bond of love and friendship has grown to be a beautiful gift. We've always known each other, of course, from belonging to Fruitport Christian Reformed Church for years, but this does change things forever! A previous part of her is living and working in me now. We're forever connected in a unique and special way. I'm forever grateful and awestruck of her sacrifice for me. Ken and I and my whole family (I am an only child, by the way) will always remember and look upon this experience as a reminder that God does work among us — always seeking willing and open hearts to help, care for, and serve others in need. God sent His Son, Jesus to serve, love, and offer Himself as a sacrifice for all of us to live eternally with Him, to share His kingdom and be heirs of all His richest blessings. There is no other way, and I'm so thankful and grateful for the gift of Cindy's kidney and the gift of God's salvation and to live for Him!

Our church doors are always open to everyone. We've added on to the existing building and we're very excited for the new updates and extra room and we want the community and beyond to come and see us to experience the wholeness of love, feeling welcome and cared about, and learning what it's all about to know God for Who and what He is. The true, basic gospel is for anyone to hear. It's a very friendly, comfortable, down to earth atmosphere. Nothing fancy or stuffy. Come as you are! We love that. Ordinary people coming together to love God, love each other, and learn how to live better lives.