

McPhee, Bill.

# McPhee 'forever' grateful to donor

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## City man back in apartment with new lungs

By Jennifer Bell

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Bill McPhee will be writing a thank-you letter to the parents of the young man who saved his life.

But McPhee — who had a double lung transplant Dec. 22 and arrived back at his Toronto apartment Jan. 8 — will never know the donor's name, nor can he sign his own name to that letter.

"It's against the law to give out or receive any personal information about a donor or a recipient, so I'll never know who donated my lungs," said 35-year-old Belleville man in a telephone interview this week.

All McPhee knows is that the donor was an Ontario male in his early 20s. The man's parents signed a form giving permission for any of their son's organs to be used following his death. The man's lungs were an almost perfect match for McPhee's blood



Intelligencer file photo

Bill McPhee at Toronto General in October, with lung transplant program staff member Cheryll Dear.

and tissue type, and it took surgeons only six hours to transplant them into McPhee at The Toronto General Dec. 22. This type of operation normally takes about 15 hours to complete.

And McPhee, who spent just over two weeks in hospital, will be grateful to that donor "forever."

"Now that I'm out of the hospital, I'll be writing a letter to the man's family. I won't be able to tell them who I am or where I live, but I hope they'll know how thankful we are."

He now sports a 16-inch scar "from armpit to armpit," and has been advised by doctors not to do any lifting for several months, but McPhee "is feeling like a new man," he reports.

His oxygen tanks — on which he was so dependent in the last year — now stand in a corner of his apartment, waiting to be picked up by the medical company.

"I won't need them anymore."

McPhee's lungs were severely damaged due to pulmonary fibrosis, caused by scarring of his lung tissue after an allergic reaction to penicillin when he was a teenager.

He and wife Debbie moved to Toronto in September of 1996 so McPhee could be placed on Toronto General's waiting list for a double lung transplant. Belleville and area residents raised the \$20,000 necessary for the McPhees to live in an apartment near the hospital while waiting for word of a donor whose lungs and blood type matched McPhee's.

And now that that long wait is over, the Belleville man says the next year will be spent getting his strength back.

"I'll be here in Toronto for a couple more months, and I have a three-day evaluation scheduled for March 24, 25 and 26. When that's done, the doctors will have a better idea of when I can come back to Belleville," said McPhee.