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Transplant program in need

By Wendy Long

When Floyd Cooper collapsed at work one morning almost four years ago he had no idea he'd wake up 10 days later with someone else's heart.

The Hamilton man, a former CFL football coach, was London University Hospital's 221st heart transplant recipient in 1989. He had only good things to say about MORE, the Multiple Organ Retrieval and Exchange Program of Ontario, last week at a community workshop at Georgetown hospital.

"My activities are not restricted in any way," Cooper said firmly. A mere three weeks after the transplant, Cooper was released as an outpatient.

The presentation by MORE,

called Transplants Work, was a gentle reminder of the importance of organ donation. Cooper spoke about his experience following a video and slide presentation by MORE on the program.

"The workshop was organized to increase people's understanding of how effective transplants are," said Eunice McGowan, social worker and chairperson of Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital's organ donation committee. She emphasized the importance of community awareness.

A change in June 1990 to the Public Hospitals Act stipulated that all hospitals must have organ donation committees to convey information and deal with potential donor

situations.

Although it's something that none of us like to think about - the donation of our vital organs, it can give life to others when our own life is beyond medical hope.

MORE regional communications coordinator Christina Marshall stressed the importance of signing the donor portion of your driver's licence as well as informing your family of your decision to be a donor.

Marshall also alleviated several misconceptions about organ donation, saying that vital organs can only be extracted when the donor is officially brain dead. This classification has strict medical requirements.

Usually, someone who is killed instantly in a motor vehicle accident cannot donate vital organs because of the absence of brain death, but can donate tissues, which include skin, bones, heart valves and eye corneas.

About 600 people in Ontario are usually waiting for a donor, 80 per cent of which require a kidney.

Donor lungs or hearts must be transplanted within four to six hours, tissues within 12 hours, livers within 15 hours, and kidneys up to 48 hours.

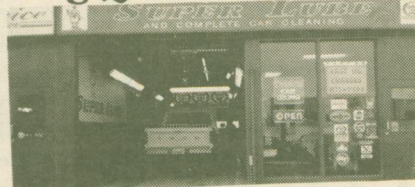
MORE itself was established in 1988 in response to recommendations from the provincial Ministry of Health task force on organ donation. The program operates around a provincial computer database, the only one in the world to both allocate organs and store medical information on transplant recipients.

In 1991, 327 kidneys were transplanted in Ontario, 151 livers, 66 hearts and 28 lungs. Not all of those awaiting a donor organ received one.

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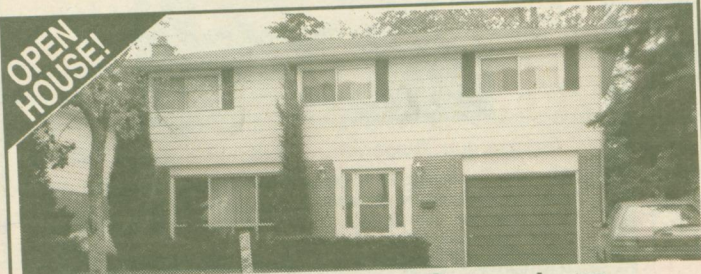


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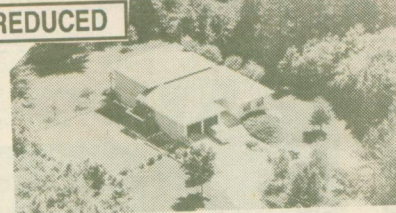


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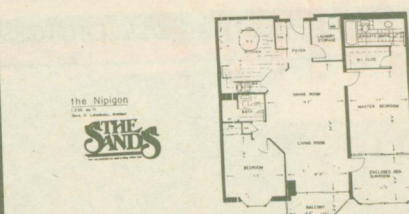
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