

Happy birthday! Life was ultimate gift 13 years ago

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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It was Nov. 21, 1997 when Jason Rumball learned his only kidney was failing.

Almost exactly two years later, the Stouffville resident received a very unique birthday gift from his sister, Rachelle Nurnberger. She wanted to donate one of her kidneys to him so he could stop dialysis treatment and hopefully live the life of a normal young man.

"It's a new lease on life to reach my goals," said the 36-year-old.

National organ and tissue donation week runs from April 21 to 28.

The Trillium Gift of Life Network's (TGLN) theme is "retire your donor card".

Just because you've signed the back of your donor card does not mean you are registered. The only way to ensure you are registered is to do so at <https://beadonor.ca/>

More than 99 per cent of Ontarians favour

organ donation, yet only 25 per cent have registered their consent, according to the TGLN website.

Registering, however, is just part of the equation. You also have to talk about your wishes with your family while you can.

'It's not an easy conversation because it's about death and dying.'

"It's not an easy conversation because it's about death and dying," said Alyshia Van Veen, a volunteer and donor family with York Region Gift of Life. The Stouffville native also sits on the provincial volunteer committee for the TGLN.

When family members know the wishes of the patient, more than 90 per cent will comply and allow the organs and tissues to be donated. If they are unaware of what the

family member wants, that number drops to 50 per cent, according to Mrs. Van Veen.

Between Nov. 1, 2012 and Jan. 31, 2013, all nine York Region municipalities were challenged to see which one could raise its registration rates by the greatest percentage.

King City won the challenge with a 1-per-cent increase. Whitchurch-Stouffville came in second with 0.9 per cent or 250 new registrants.

"It's a start in the right direction," said Mayor Wayne Emmerson. "We didn't win the competition but the Gift of Life did by getting more people (registered) and that was our game plan."

In all, more than 3,000 York Region residents registered to be organ and tissue donors during the three-month long campaign, according to Mrs. Van Veen.

The challenge was the first of its kind in the province and has since been replicated in other cities in Ontario, according to Mrs. Van Veen.

Mr. Rumball was born with spina bifida and had a history of bladder and kidney problems.

It was during a routine ultrasound as a child it was discovered Mr. Rumball had only one kidney. A person is typically born with two, but can function with one.

When Mr. Rumball was first diagnosed in 1997 with kidney failure, he started dialysis treatment and was put on an organ transplant list. At the time, he said he had a five-year wait.

Of the 1,456 people waiting for an organ transplant in Ontario, 1,019 need a kidney, according to the TGLN website.

It has the longest wait of all the organs — about four years — according to Leona Hollingsworth, a spokesperson for the TGLN.

The reason is likely due to the prevalence of



ALYSHIA VAN VEEN: Stouffville native promoting organ and tissue donation across York Region.

kidney disease, in particular diabetes, according to Ms Hollingsworth.

Mr. Rumball's transplant took place Jan. 18, 2000.

A few days after the operation Mr. Rumball said he started to feel better and joked he was ready to run a marathon.

Shortly thereafter, Mr. Rumball and his sister were released from the hospital. For Mr. Rumball this meant no more dialysis and he could eat what he wanted.

That spring Mr. Rumball suffered a minor set-back. The main artery in his kidney was narrowing, once again causing organ failure.

However, the procedure to correct this was somewhat simpler. A stent was inserted into the kidney's artery to open it up and restore its normal function.

Today, Mr. Rumball leads a normal life.

The physical altercation took place in the Main Street and Park Drive area around 4:30 p.m., April 17.

Both parties involved in the altercation were male youths, police said.

The victim sustained minor injuries, they said.

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Online spat got physical: Police

A spat that began on social media got physical last week resulting in a 17-year-old Stouffville boy being charged with assault, according to York Regional Police.

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