



Waunakee Rotary Club

Nov. 27, 2008
Vol. 42 No. 19

Organ donation saved Lori Wandschneider's daughter, Ali, and as a result the Waunakee resident feels it is her duty to be a spokesperson for the cause. Lori told Ali's story at the Waunakee Rotary Club meeting Nov. 20.

A surprise child, Ali was born Dec. 17, 1998. When she turned 1, her "fat belly" was a concern, Lori said, but the doctor said to come back in three months for more tests. At 15 months Ali went in for more tests and the doctor told her parents she had Alpha 1-antitrypsin deficiency – a disease affecting Ali's liver. Subsequently, the family found out Ali had a one in four chance of being born with the disease since both Lori and her husband were carriers of the recessive gene.

The liver specialist told Lori her "baby could die," and needed a liver transplant someday. So every month, Ali visited her pediatrician and liver specialist for check-ups.

As Ali grew, her belly grew, Lori said. But on Oct. 12, 2000, everything changed. Lori said the doctors told her if Ali ever started vomiting blood she would have to be rushed to the hospital immediately. After spending three hours in the emergency room, it became clear Ali would need a liver transplant soon.

In addition to needing a liver, Ali was dealing with a collapsed lung, pneumonia, a double ear infection and a hole in her esophagus. She was put into the intensive care unit where she was on life support with a feeding tube.

On Oct. 21, 2001, it wasn't looking good for Ali.

"Doctors even came into my room and said, 'Lori, she's got about 20 hours to live.'"

Complicating things was the flight ban after 9/11, so all the family could do was pray a liver would become available nearby.

"Our prayers definitely were answered," Lori said. A liver arrived on Nov. 1, 2001, around 1:30 a.m. By 3:30 a.m., Ali was taken to the operating room, and "everybody was ecstatic," Lori said.

To her surprise, Ali did really well through the surgery, Lori said, although like many transplant recipients she struggled with rejection. And because she had spent so much time confined to a bed, she had to undergo extensive physical and occupational therapy. But on Jan. 10, 2002, Ali came home.

"After her transplant, she was able to do things she couldn't before," Lori said.

And now Ali can live a normal life.

Ali's story shows how important it is to think about organ donation now.

"It's important now to make the decision about organ donation," Lori said.

She said she's thankful that Steve, the husband of Delilah whose liver Ali received, followed through on his wife's wish to be an organ donor after her sudden death.

"You never know, and that's why you need to make these decisions ahead of time," Lori said.

Because Delilah did just that, Ali was "reborn" on Nov. 1, 2001, Lori said.

After the transplant, Ali was able to meet Delilah's family, and now their family considers Ali a member and the Wandschneiders consider Delilah part of theirs.

Lori said Ali puts a face on organ donation, and 18 people every day have the need for a donated organ. It's simple enough to become a donor – just affix a sticker to and sign your driver's license. And don't forget to inform your family to eliminate confusion down the road, Lori said.

"Our society recycles everything, why not organs?"

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Calendar of Events:

- Nov. 27, Thanksgiving Breakfast
- Nov. 30, Rotary in Lights lighting ceremony
- Dec. 6, Santa at the Village Center

Other items:

•The Empty Stocking Club, a Wisconsin State Journal charity that provides gifts for needy children, is looking for volunteers from local service organization to help Dec. 15-17. Contact Dan Statz with questions.

•President Statz also encouraged members to bring at least one potential new member to the club to try and continue to grow the club.

Guests: Cameron Clapper, guest of Phil Willems; Marie Zorn, guest of the club; Brent Neevel, guest of Roberta Baumann; Bill Tygum, guest of Rich Wipperfurth; and Mike Ableidger, guest of Tom Ries.

Birthdays: Dec. 6, Bud Zander; Dec. 8, Neil King; Dec. 8, Roberta Baumann.

Anniversaries: None.

Prayers: Dec. 4, Pat Durden; Dec. 11, Susan Vergeront.

Programs: Nov. 27, Thanksgiving day, no meeting; Dec. 4, Club Assembly.

Greeters: Dec. 4, Ken Pesik and Bob Pulvermacher; Dec. 11, Tom Reis and Ellen Schaaf; Dec. 18, Jim Schmitz and Steve Schlaver.