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## Family grateful for transplants, needs one more

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By Reggie Jarrell, staff writer

EAST MOLINE -- From their bright eyes, beaming smiles, and hearty laughter one would never guess the long, difficult medical road this mother/daughter duo has traveled. In the past decade, the two have had two organ transplants each, and now the family waits for one more.

Nancy Ford, 65, has had a double-lung transplant, and had to receive another lung transplant after her body rejected the first match. Her daughter, Colleen Ford, 46, has had a pancreas-kidney transplant and a second pancreas transplant after the first was rejected. Nancy is now on the kidney transplant list awaiting a new kidney.



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**Photo: Paul Colletti**

The Ford family has dealt with numerous organ transplants. Colleen (left) has had a kidney transplant and two pancreas transplants while Nancy has undergone two lung transplant procedures. Husband and father, Bill, has been close by throughout.

They've seen more than their share of hospitals, needles and operating tables. They have traveled thousands of miles, and seen the insides of too many hotel and motel rooms, seeking medical care from Chicago, to California, to New Orleans, and other medical stops along the way.

Both are organ recipients and appreciate receiving not just a second chance, but multiple chances at life. 'God is hanging on to me for some reason,' Nancy said. 'God keeps you going, God's blessed me.'

'I just live life to its fullest,' Colleen said. 'I'm always in a positive mind, I have to be. I'm so thankful for the second chance at life I have.'

Despite being a nonsmoker, Mrs. Ford was diagnosed with emphysema in 1985. The former beauty shop owner received a double lung transplant in July 2001. For awhile things were 'fantastic,' but her body rejected the lungs and she was back on the transplant waiting list. In April 2002, Nancy received a right lung transplant.

She takes nine or 10 medications daily for the affects of the three anti-rejection prescriptions she also needs. Because the anti-rejection drugs have damaged her kidneys,

Nancy now needs a kidney transplant. For that list, there's a five-year wait. In the meantime she receives dialysis treatment three times a week. Complicating her wait on the transplant list, Mrs. Ford has a rare blood type.

Colleen Ford was 16 years old when diagnosed with diabetes. The condition has required her to take insulin three times a day for 24 years. In September 1998, she received a kidney-pancreas transplant after spending a year on dialysis. Her body rejected the pancreas, and she had a second pancreas transplant in May of 2000.

'It's been working great since' Colleen said.

Colleen takes two anti-rejection medications, along with five others medications daily.

But there's no grumbling with this family. They are very appreciative for the donors, the doctors, church, their family and friends that give them support. And they are all thankful for the Illinois donor organ program and said more people should become involved. All support the new Illinois First-Person Consent Organ/Tissue Donor Registry which allows the donor to make a legally binding decision without family permission.

While Nancy waits her turn for another transplant, the family makes the most of every day and takes every breath of life seriously.

The lung transplant has meant no more wheelchair use for Mrs. Ford, no more struggling to walk to the bathroom from the dining area. No more waiting in the car while Bil, her husband of 49 years, does the grocery shopping. Although she still uses oxygen and has to pace herself, there is no comparison how she feels now to what she has gone through.

'It's just a gift of life,' Nancy said. 'I think I'm doing great, I feel good.'

Colleen remembers the rough times of spending several days a week in a hospital, every month, for nearly 10 years. That's changed and she's enjoying life again.

Colleen loves the outdoors and plans to return to Hawaii with several friends next year.

Travel is one hobby Bil, a retired East Moline Police Officer, and Nancy continue to do. There's a long, white recreational vehicle in the driveway for cross country trips, a Honda Gold Wing motorcycle in the garage and camping plans in the making.

All agree that life is not perfect and there still are health issues after an organ transplant, but they said it's so much better than before.

'We're appreciating everything,' Bil said, with Nancy agreeing.

'You stop and smell the roses' she said. 'The little things that used to bother you, you don't even think about it.'

## Comments

2 comments on this article

Posted by **Scott** from **Chicago** at 7:58AM on Tuesday, 5/8/07

The Ford family's story is all too similar to that of the other 4,700 Illinoisans and 96,000 people nationwide who are awaiting lifesaving transplants.

In conjunction with Secretary of State Jesse White and donation agencies across the state, the Donate Life Illinois campaign is working hard to register 3.5 million Illinois residents in the state's new organ/tissue donor registry.

Illinois is the 43rd state to initiate such a registry and it's a crucial step forward in helping save hundreds of more lives each year.

Many Illinois residents are still unaware that signing the back of your driver's license is no longer adequate and that you need to re-register post Jan. 1, 2006 to join the new registry.

You can do so by taking 30 seconds to register at our official campaign website at [www.IAmAreYou.org](http://www.IAmAreYou.org)

It's just 30 seconds, but it may mean all the time in the world to others awaiting a second chance at life. Just ask Nancy or Colleen.

-Scott M.

Donate Life Illinois - Campaign Manager

Posted by **from Illinois** at 8:38AM on Tuesday, 5/8/07

God Bless you and your family. Hope you all get what you need and get better.