My Organ Donor’s Birthday

March 28, 2019 By Karen Hoyt

Karen Hoyt is a blogger who has a story about hepatitis C, cirrhosis, end-stage liver disease, liver cancer, and liver transplantation. This excerpt first appeared on Karen’s I Help C blog.

I can’t write about my organ donor the way I write about everything else. As a transplant recipient, there just aren’t enough words in my vocabulary or heart. My dear donor, that beautiful boy who’s pictures I have memorized in every corner of my mind – the boy whose liver is tucked literally beneath my heart – would have been 21 years old on March 11. This blog is for my organ donor’s birthday.

I wrote a letter to his family soon after my transplant. Gavin’s mom and I have messaged a lot since then. In public speaking, I haven’t mentioned his name, but mom recently said it would be fine now. However, even before I knew his name, he had moved far beyond being the boy who passed, whose mom donated his organs to save lives. Gavin wasn’t just the boy who shared his liver to rid me of cancer. He is, and always will be, many things to many people.

Gavin is the boy whose life on earth ended, while mine was saved. I say this in a heavy hearted way that only a transplant recipient will understand. My donor passed too young, leaving forever during springtime, and his life will be remembered, and celebrated like springtime.

Survivor’s Heartfelt Emotions
Forgive me if this blog is disjointed. My heart is in a tangle right now. I’ve typed and edited sentence after sentence, and am finally going to publish – on time – the ways I’m learning to think about, and celebrate, my organ donor’s birthday.

Liver Cancer – By March, the tumor was like a sumo wrestler. It was slowly getting more aggressive, growing rapidly, and being joined by a fellow tumor. Additional liquid poison was poured directly through a catheter in my femoral artery. The tube protected the vein from destruction, and allowed targeted delivery on the tumors and surrounding liver tissue. It was our 3rd attempt to rid me of The Awful. At any moment, my Meld could change and I would be denied a transplant, removed from the list.

Click here to read more about how Karen celebrated Gavin’s life.

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