

INSPIRING HOPE

Mark Hennessy - "It's been four years since my transplant and there's no stopping me now!"



In May 2007 a trip to the doctor changed my life. I had an ultrasound to check on issues from kidney stones when doctors saw **fluid in my lungs**. My lungs were full of water because my heart was failing.

It was really surprising to learn that I had **five blockages** in my heart and had already had two heart attacks. Looking back, I recognized the symptoms. At the time, I just thought it was complications from medications I was taking for other illnesses. My heart was at 15 percent function and I went to have a quadruple bypass the next day.

Doctors hoped that bypass surgery could mend my heart, but it couldn't recover. They put me on a **Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD)** to keep me alive until I could have a **heart transplant**. I had to be as healthy as possible to receive my transplant and that meant I had to quit smoking. I went six months smoke-free and was given the OK to receive a transplant.

On Dec. 26, 2007 I joined the national transplant waiting list. As I waited, I became weaker. Because I had an LVAD, I lost muscle strength. I was barely moving by the time the call came that a heart was available for me. It was Jan. 6, 2008 – a day I consider to be my second birthday. After the transplant surgery, I felt a difference right away. I was ready to go home after five days and was walking on a treadmill in a little more than a week.

It's been four years since my heart transplant and there's no stopping me now! I am able to enjoy life in Zanesville. I chop my own wood to heat my home, spend time with my daughters, and make the most of every day I've been given.

Right after my transplant, I felt the need to give back for the gift I received. I like working at health fairs with Lifeline of Ohio and talking to people, sharing my story and encouraging them to register as organ and tissue donors. I've also joined a couple of support groups for heart patients (Mended Hearts). I try to talk other heart patients through their experiences, share mine and help them stay positive.

I know I wouldn't be here without my donor. I write to my donor's family every year around the time of my transplant. I haven't heard back yet, but I just want them to know how grateful I am.

If you've had a similar experience, or would just like to talk to Mark about living with heart disease, his contact information is listed below!

Mended Hearts of Central Ohio

www.MendedHeartsCentralOhio.org – mahennessy@yahoo.com

It is great to be alive – and to help others