

Diabetic celebrates 2 birthdays

By Shirlee Rose Iden
staff writer

Marilyn Berman Habsburg considers it a perk to have two birthdays. "The one on which I was born is Oct. 21, but since 1986 I also celebrate Nov. 21 with equal emphasis," she said.

On that date three years ago, Habsburg, a longtime diabetic who had been suffering eye and kidney complications, underwent transplant surgery, which gave her a functioning kidney and a new lease on life.

Habsburg's new kidney came as a loving donation from a 28-year-old woman who died from the effects of a brain tumor. "She gave her eyes and her heart as well as the other kidney," Habsburg said. "Somewhere, someone is walking around with that other kidney. At least I hope so."

ALONG WITH many Michigan residents, volunteers, the American Diabetes Association and the Weight Watchers Group Inc. of Farmington Hills, Habsburg is on the offensive this week to fight diabetes and its complications.

For Habsburg, this is part of her job as director of corporate affairs for the Weight Watchers Group Inc., a position that brought her home from Evanston, Ill. after almost a decade.

For Diabetic Awareness Week, free diabetic screenings are offered, which include a written questionnaire to identify those at high risk of having or developing the disease. A

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full week of open house events has been planned.

At 7 p.m. Wednesday an open house will take place at the Southland Weight Watchers Center, One Northland Plaza, suite 107, 20755 Greenfield at Eight Mile.

Habsburg will speak at this and other open houses, such as one at 11 a.m. Saturday at Weight Watchers, 32746 Grand River, Farmington Hills.

An estimated 500,000 people with diabetes are Michigan residents. Most can live a normal lifestyle by following their doctor's prescribed treatment program and maintaining a positive attitude, eating sensibly and exercising regularly.

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HABSBERG grew up in the Metro

area. Before she could read words, she could read music. A golden-haired prodigy, she first climbed a piano bench at age 4. She played with the Detroit Symphony and auditioned before musical greats.

"I was raised for applause," she said. Music was her life for a long time and many thought this was a woman who had it all. What she didn't have was the single-mindedness and discipline to pursue a career as a concert pianist. She gravitated to public relations.

After marriage and divorce, she lived in Southfield with her daughter, Brooke, now 20, before leaving for a new marriage and life in Chicago nearly a decade ago.

When her diabetes was diagnosed in 1970, she admits she was a "basket case, someone who used to faint at the sight of a needle." Three months after diagnosis, she had to go on insulin, and learning to give herself the first shot, she fainted dead away.

This kind of challenge didn't deter Habsburg, by her own definition, "a determined and positive person" who learned to give the shots, and do all of the things vital to her health.

SINCE 1985 when she was in a serious car accident, Habsburg's health deteriorated. "I believe shock can aggravate the system. In my case, after the trauma my kidney function went kablooey and I suffered eye hemorrhages. I was frightened, but I did whatever the doctors suggested."

In mid-1986, Habsburg's husband,



Marilyn Habsburg on the offensive

Gary, accompanied her to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. where doctors advised her to go home, go on dialysis (which she calls a wash-machine for your blood), and see a transplant surgeon. "I couldn't even walk up two stairs I was so weak, but finally I did sign with a surgeon in Evanston," she said.

Within six weeks, she was called and told, "Marilyn, we have a kidney for you."

Habsburg's memories of the surgery are only positive. She called "everyone I knew around the country" from the hospital before her transplant, and woke up "starving hungry."

Though she has to live life a day at a time, doesn't everyone? And Habsburg doesn't only have two birthdays, she has three kidneys, but most importantly, one that functions.

Survey to locate Hills emergency buildings

Farmington Hills Civil Defense/Disaster Service, in conjunction with the Michigan State Police Emergency Management Division, will conduct a facilities survey of public and private buildings in the city during November.

This survey is part of a continuing state effort to identify non-residential buildings that could be used for emergency feeding and sheltering of disaster victims or people temporarily from their homes due to natural or technological hazards.

The facilities survey will be performed by staff members of the Emergency Management Division and could take about three weeks to complete.

During that time, the survey team will be working out of a temporary

field office at the Northville post of the Michigan State Police.

Each building survey will be visited by the team to determine the building size, and the materials used in construction and the services available during an emergency.

Each member of the survey team will carry identification cards, and the city coordinators office will be available to answer questions regarding the survey by calling 473-9680.

This information will be used to update existing emergency operations plans of the city that cover responses to a range of emergencies, both man-made and natural, and to make the best use of community resources.

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