

Saving grace

Kidney transplant signals brighter future for youth

By JUDITH BERNE

Jan. 20 will go down in history as the day 52 American hostages in Iran were set free.

But for the Langwald family of West Bloomfield, it was also the day 13-year-old Andy gained the chance to live a relatively normal life.

On that date, his mother's left kidney was removed, then successfully implanted in Andy's body during a day-long operation at Mount Carmel Mercy Hospital in Detroit.

"It immediately began to work right on the operating table," Annette Langwald said. "It doesn't always work right away. It was a very happy day."

Three weeks later, Mrs. Langwald returned to her duties as owner of Elkin Travel in Oak Park. This week, Andy returned to classes at Hillside Day School in Farmington Hills alongside his brother Michael, 9. His sister, Sheri, 15, attends West Bloomfield High.

"We both have perfect kidney function," Mrs. Langwald said. "He can do anything he wants to except contact sports."

Beyond that, "There's a certain gloom that sits over you. It's gone," she said.

IT WAS JUST a year ago that Andy, who had had a mild form of kidney disease since early childhood, came down

with kidney failure.

"By August, his kidneys had failed so completely he had to go on dialysis," Mrs. Langwald said.

The two made the trip to Children's Hospital in Detroit three times a week, where Andy was hooked up to a dialysis machine for four hours at a time.

Dialysis is a process of removing water and waste products by machine. These functions are normally performed by the kidneys.

"What the public thinks is that dialysis is an acceptable way of life — and is for many people," Mrs. Langwald said. "But for children, it's very painful."

They got sick while they're on the machine, some vomit, some pass out and have to be given medication to bring them out of it, she said. In addition, Andy was very tired and had little appetite.

"I didn't get through dialysis too good," Andy said. He found it painful, although he said some other children had less pain but "They got sick more."

Asked how he coped, he said, "I just knew it had to end sometime."

"Without dialysis, these children and adults wouldn't be here," Mrs. Langwald said.

"It's a means of keeping alive a terminal patient. It keeps you going — but not at a top rate of speed."

WHEN THEY decided on a kidney transplant, Mrs. Langwald had no initial thought that she would be the donor.

"Being a widow, I wasn't really thinking about donating at first," she said. She had in mind that Andy would be matched to "a cadaver donor" — someone who had donated his kidneys to science.

But as they learned "the considerably higher degree of success with a living related donor, I decided I wanted to be tested. We were considered an 'A' match."

It could have been otherwise. Even kidney patients who have a willing living related or unrelated donor may not find one with a suitable blood type and tissue match.

"We know of families of nine people and there's no match. People should donate their kidneys — not bury them," she said.

"It's not going to do any good in the ground. There are so many people just waiting for them in order to live a near-normal life."

At the same time, "If anybody is considering immediately donating a kidney to a relative, the rewards far outweigh the discomfort."

"My daughter immediately said she wanted to give him a kidney. Being a minor, I didn't even have her tested."

"But heaven forbid, if his kidney would one day reject, we could look at the other two (children)."

FACTS ARE every kidney transplant will be rejected, said Georgeann Edford, transplant coordinator at Mount Carmel.

"But it might not be for 50 years."

That's because the body works to reject foreign elements. A kidney transplant between identical twins (the best possible donor) is still successful after more than 22 years — the longest on record, Ms. Edford said.

Siblings are considered the next best match.

The Langwalds opted for an experimental anti-rejection drug in use at Mount Carmel, in hopes of long-term rejection. Ten treatments with the A.L.G. — anti-lymphoblast-globulin — also permitted a lighter dosage of cortisone, traditionally used to suppress the immunity system in transplant operations.

Mount Carmel's statistics overwhelm the national odds for successful kidney transplants. Ninety percent of transplants from living related donors are successful compared to 80 percent nationwide. And the hospital records 67 percent success in cadaver transplants compared to 30-40 percent nationally.

Both the Langwalds and Ms. Edford point to the aggressive approach at the kidney center, which features a skilled medical staff and vital support services, as well as the use of A.L.G.

"We drive the patients crazy," Ms. Edford said. "They know almost as much as we do about their care. They are totally involved."

"Andy is super," she added. He comes in every Monday for tests, then he calls to find out the results.

"He has a really good chance to live a normal life for quite a while."

"IT TOOK A lot of people pitching in," Mrs. Langwald said. Since the operation to remove the kidney was major surgery, "I was unable to be physically supportive of Andy right away. My sister and brother-in-law were with him all night in intensive care."

They were spelled by Andy's grandparents. The Langwalds' home is still filled with gifts of flowers, plants and candy.

"We've had such a great outpouring

of love from friends, associates and family," Mrs. Langwald said.

"It really helps to know a lot of people are counting on you."

Beyond that, she described the feeling of camaraderie and friendship that develops with fellow kidney patients.

"It was a bad experience, but a lot of good came out of it. Your whole life changes. You learn to deal with it by accepting it."

"The ending is when you go on to live your life."



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Walled Lake cancels millage election

The Walled Lake Board of Education cancelled a special millage election originally scheduled for April 9.

Instead, the board will conduct a series of study sessions to evaluate the district's financial status. The board also will prepare a plan for dealing with a projected budget deficit approaching \$4.5 million in the 1981-82 school year.

The first study session is 7:30 tonight at Walled Lake Central auditorium.

The board decided to cancel the April 9 millage election after reviewing two reports from a Special Citizens Committee regarding the district's financial status.

One of those reports — the chairperson's report — urged the board to seek three new mills for two years.

The other report — the minority report — said the committee failed to investigate means of reducing costs. It recommended the board establish a continuing advisory committee to explore financial alternatives.

Board members said the decision against new millage was based on several factors. One factor is the district must seek renewal this year of a four-mill proposal which expired in December.

The four mills cannot be levied again this year unless voters approve a new proposal.

ANOTHER FACTOR in cancelling the new millage was that any new millage approved prior to

May 1 is subject to a rollback under the Headlee amendment.

Even if voters approved the April 9 increase, the district would not receive the full benefits of it because the levy would be rolled back to meet the dictates of the Headlee amendment.

Several board members expressed concern that a two-mill special education millage from Oakland County could impact any hopes of securing additional millage for the Walled Lake district.

Other trustees noted the governor may request a special election to consider a tax cut proposal sometime in May.

"I'm particularly concerned about how we are going to get additional millage and then come back with our renewal request later in the year," said board president Stephen Lasher.

"I think we need to take a closer look at all the factors involved in this and decide how we can best meet our needs in a package that will win acceptance from the voters," he added.

SUPERINTENDENT Don Sheldon said failure to seek additional millage in April would create extreme difficulties in planning.

"Unless we get the renewal as well as a millage increase, we're going to have to cut some \$4-4.5 million out of the budget," he said.

"My concern is that we're going to be left hanging by a thread in terms of financial planning unless we determine just how much money is going to be available next year."



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Religious debate sponsored

The impact of religion in modern-day society will be examined by noted theologians and religious leaders when Mercy College of Detroit presents "Conversations on Religious Issues in the Eighties" on Monday, March 16 at 7:30 p.m.

The combination panel and forum discussion will feature Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit Thomas Gumbleton, Yale University Associate Professor of Ethics Margaret Farley, RSM, Rabbi Ernst Conrad of Temple Kol Ami, West Bloomfield and Dr. Oscar Remick, president of Alma College. Ronnie Clemmer of PM Magazine will moderate the panel and audience discussion.

The discussion will focus on critical issues facing religion in this decade and will examine the role of its institutions in determining values for society, particularly in relationship to the vital political, social, economic and international crises of our time. Special emphasis will be placed on items of particular interest to metro-Detroit residents, including unemployment, inflation, affirmative action, organized labor, business, pollution, nuclear power, plus issues concerning sex, the family and women. The church of the future will also be discussed.

Bishop Gumbleton, who achieved national recognition when he represented the American Bishops in a Christmas 1979 visit to the hostages in Iran,

has been a longtime advocate of social justice. He has taken an active role in current issues including poverty programs in the U.S., civil rights, questions of war and peace and the rights of the oppressed. He is president of Bread for the World and of Pax Christi-USA, a member of the Committee for J.P. Stevens Workers, and is an active supporter of the Michigan Welfare Reform Coalition.

Sr. Margaret Farley, a former assistant professor of philosophy at Mercy College, has been outspoken on matters pertaining to women and the church, including divorce, abortion, and sexual inequality. She has written several articles pertaining to her chief areas of interest: medical ethics, history of theological ethics and women's studies.

Rabbi Conrad, who founded Temple Kol Ami in 1986, has demonstrated his concern for various social problems including racial justice, poverty, the rights of the underprivileged and the limitation of constitutional rights through his work at Clinton Valley Center, the Michigan League of Human Services and the Anti-Defamation League.

Prior to joining Alma College as its president, Dr. Remick, a leading spokesman on religion and higher education, served as a minister, a professor of religion and theology, and an administrator.

For information, call 592-6200.