

Livonia woman listed top priority for transplant

By Teri Benas
staff writer

Glynda Chamie, the Livonia woman waiting for a liver transplant operation, is now considered a "top priority" surgery candidate at two hospitals equipped for the procedure, her sister, Suzanne Portman, said this week.

"She's top priority at both hospitals (the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., and Pittsburgh's Presbyterian University Hospital). That's a big hurdle right there," Portman said of the hospitals' ranking.

"Now we just have to wait to get one (an available organ)." Portman, a Comstock Street resident, said her sister likely will be admitted to one of the two hospitals, depending on which one secures an organ first, in the next couple of weeks. She recently returned home from the Mayo Clinic where she had a "blood washing" treatment.

Chamie, 46, the recipient of local fund-raising efforts, has suffered from a slowly debilitating liver disease called primary sclerosing cholangitis

ever since she was seriously injured in an auto accident almost three years ago. Portman has cared for her in her own home for almost as long.

FUND-RAISING efforts, which have collected almost \$10,000 in local contributions, were launched last November to help pay for costly medical bills. Portman then estimated that reaching \$10,000, married to a Chrysler Corp. employee, Chamie's hospitalization is covered by her husband's employer's Blue Cross-Blue Shield policy. And now the bulk of the upcoming transplant costs will be covered by Chrysler as well. (Until its announcement last month, the Blues considered organ transplant operations to be "experimental" and therefore excluded

from policy coverage). "Ford Motor Co. and General Motors have included certain types of transplants within their collective bargaining agreements and we've agreed to apply those same rules on an exception basis to Mrs. Chamie," said Bill Johnson, manager of Chrysler's medical benefit plan.

Although Chrysler does not yet offer such benefits to employees, he said the company does not believe "employees or dependents of employees should be at a disadvantage in waiting to negotiate."

The company's agreement to the Chamie would pay up to \$25,000 for professional fees resulting from the surgery.

MEANWHILE, Portman's fund-raising efforts continue, despite discouraging deaths of candidates placed in local businesses. Earlier this year two women from a Livonia Big Boy Restaurant and the Plymouth Road Good Time Bar. Patrons reported a white middle-aged woman was suspected in one of the thefts. Since then, two more candidates have been stolen, said Portman. One was taken from Silverman's Restaurant on Plymouth Road by a woman who lied and said Chamie had died. Another was taken at the Pine Tree Cleaners.

"People shouldn't make statements like that," said Portman. "She's very much alive and waiting."

Livonia Police Officer Donald Myers, who investigated the earlier thefts, said they never found out who was responsible for the thefts. "It really wish I could have been some help in this, but it's really tough when we have no investigative leads," Myers did say they were successful in clearing up an unrelated but similar case recently. Police did locate a pair of teen responsible for the theft of a Lions Club canister from a Seven Mile Big Boy Restaurant two weeks ago. One was a former employee, he said. Portman said she plans to organize a dance-fund-raiser in the near future to feature an unnamed band and the Straight Harmony Group of the Sweet Adelines singers. She is currently looking for sponsors for the event.

Orchard Ridge hosts Junior Olympic meets

With the 1984 Summer Olympic Games still fresh in their minds, hundreds of young athletes are getting ready to compete in two major state-wide events: the 1985 McDonald's Junior Olympic Swim Meet, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, March 15-17, and the McDonald's U.S.G.F. State Sectional Gymnastics Competition, Sunday, March 17.

Both events are sponsored by local McDonald's restaurants. McDonald's 1985 Junior Olympic Swim Meet, one of Michigan's largest amateur events, will take place at the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College. The Michigan Stingray Swim Association will host some 500 participants, representing nearly 50 amateur swim organizations throughout southeastern Michigan.

"Boys and girls will compete separately in four age-group competitions: 10 and under, 11-12, 13-14 and 15-18," said Bill Morton, meet director. "Morning events will start at 8 a.m. and afternoon events at 1 p.m."

"McDonald's has a longstanding commitment to the advancement of competitive swimming," said Tony Kotacki, local McDonald's restaurant owner. "The fast-service restaurant

company underwrote construction costs of the swimming and diving facility used in Los Angeles during the 1984 Olympic Games. It is a major part of that commitment is the sponsorship of local youth sports activities."

Gymnastics is another sport increasing in popularity among the nation's youth as a result of the televised 1984 Olympic Games. That growing popularity will be evident during the McDonald's U.S.G.F. State Sectional Competition, March 16, at the Melvin G. Bally Recreation Center, 36651 Ford Road, Westland.

Over 150 youths from across the state are expected to participate in the exciting event, sponsored by McDonald's and hosted by the Go-Fers Gymnastics Club. The competition will run from 9 a.m. through 8 p.m.

Gymnasts will compete in three age groups: 9-11, 12-14 and 15 and older. They will be judged according to performance on balance beam, floor exercises, vault and uneven parallel bars.

"McDonald's involvement in the U.S.G.F. State Sectional Competition will help showcase Michigan as a major gymnastics power in the United States," said Go-Fers coach Ronald Westernman.

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