

Former inmate in good condition after transplant

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER
pmurphy@oe.hometown.com

Mindy Brass was in "good condition" after receiving a heart transplant, according to physicians at the University of Michigan Medical Center.

But it's too early to determine if Brass will be healthy enough to take part in her retrial, said cardiologist Dr. Keith D. Aaronson and thoracic surgeon Dr. Francis Fagan, who orchestrated the heart transplant Sunday in Ann Arbor.

Brass is a former prison inmate who is under house arrest in Farmington Hills while awaiting retrial in Oakland Circuit Court on charges of trafficking in cocaine.

Prosecutor David Gorceyca Tuesday said Brass would be afforded every chance to regain her health and strength before the trial continues. But Brass still faces a charge that could send her back to prison for the rest of her life, he said.

Visiting Circuit Court Judge Meyer Warshawsky, who hears only drug cases, was unavailable for comment Tuesday. Previously, however, he expressed concern about a possible mistrial

because of the delay.

Brass, 40, who had spent almost seven years in prison before being released last summer to await retrial, had been on the transplant list at the University of Michigan since October.

The call notifying her that a heart was available came about 7 a.m. Sunday, according to Robin Fraser, who with her husband Fred Barrett befriended Brass and took her into their Farmington Hills home. Brass is on an electronic tether and she can not leave the house except for religious or medical reasons.

She was rushed to the hospital and underwent surgery in the afternoon. "Mindy was scared and anxious," said Fraser. "But she was ready. The doctors kept us informed at every step. At one point they notified us her heart had been removed from her body, and she was on a breathing machine."

Doctors also said the damage to Brass' heart was worse than originally thought, said Fraser, "and she was in danger of death."

Fraser and her husband saw Brass Monday. But she was still unconscious. The statement



Friends: Farmington Hills resident Robin Fraser (top) befriended ex-inmate Mindy Brass (bottom), who lives with the Fraser family under house arrest.

issued Tuesday noted that organ recipients are at risk for rejection, infection or other complications. But Brass' "post transplant course was uneventful."

Fraser said she and her husband hope to get Brass' teenage daughter, Erika, to Michigan to be with her mother. The daughter has been in foster care since Brass' arrest.

Brass lived in San Diego and had never set foot in Michigan prior to December, 1991, when two associates were arrested in Troy while attempting to sell a kilo of cocaine to customers who were in fact undercover police.

The two associates, William Leflet and Emil Mardenall, implicated Brass in the transaction, and she was arrested and brought to Michigan. In October, 1992, she was convicted of conspiring to deliver 650 grams or more of cocaine and sentenced to life in prison under Michigan's drug-lifer law.

A retrial was ordered last summer after it was ruled that defense attorneys did not have access to information challenging the credibility of Leflet, who agreed to testify as a prosecution witness.

The retrial started Jan. 4 and continued until April 12 after being repeatedly interrupted when Brass became ill or collapsed in court.

Bill would ban violent students

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER
trichard@oe.hometown.com

Local school boards would be required to expel assaultive students and inform local law enforcement authorities under a pair of hotly debated bills passed by the state House of Representatives.

The "safe schools" bills, as Republicans called them, were approved 84-22 on Feb. 17 and sent to the Senate, where passage is likely.

"Removing violent students restores a safe learning environment. And troubled students are given a second chance," said House Speaker Chuck Perricone, R-Kalamazoo.

The lead measure, House Bill 4240, would amend the School Code to require a school board:

■ To implement a local law enforcement agreement to

report incidents that threaten school safety.

■ To implement an expulsion policy for students who assault others at school. The expulsion policy would be similar to the existing policy for students who have weapons in school.

The companion measure, House Bill 4241, would enable chartering of strict discipline public school academies. The bills are "tie-barred" — neither would take effect unless both become law.

Critics, mostly Democrats, said the bills would toss unruly students onto the streets. Some feared there would be no remedy if a school acted wrongly against a student.

State Rep. Andrew Raczkowski, R-Farmington Hills, was among those legislators voting for the measure.

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