



Organ Donor Families Meet Transplant Recipients

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(Photo Credit: KDKA)

Reporting [Dave Crawley](#)

PITTSBURGH (KDKA) — Organ donors and their families were honored today at Allegheny General Hospital.

It was a chance for recipients to give thanks – for the gift of life.

Bearing roses and flickering candles, symbols of rebirth, transplant recipients gathered to thank donors and families and a second chance at life.

“Twenty-six families that made that decision provided 78 lifesaving organs for recipients waiting,” said Susan Stuart with the Center for Organ Recovery Education.

Mary Grace Hensell and heart recipient Melvin Protzman are united by tragedy and hope.

When 24-year-old Brian Hensell died in a car accident two years ago, the seriously ill Butler man received a call from AGH.

“She said, “how would you like to get your heart today?” said Protzman. “And I guess she said I went silent and then I said to her, “you trying to give me a heart attack?” My chest just went so tight.”

Brian Hensell’s mother has been an operating room nurse for 34 years – 13 at Allegheny General.

At her son's funeral, a fellow nurse and friend told Mary Grace she believed her cousin had received Bryan's heart. Twelve weeks after that surgery, Mary Grace picked up the phone and plucked up the courage to make that call.

"I contacted him to find out because I needed to know who had gotten it," said Hensell.

"From that moment it's been nothing but special moments and it's just been great," Protzman said.

They share the strongest bond two friends could ever have.

"There is no greater gift that any one person can give somebody," he said.

"Knowing that you won't have this person back but that somebody else can live on and do good things," Hensell said.

Now and then a mother listens, to a heart that still beats strong.

<http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2013/04/29/organ-donor-families-meet-transplant-recipients/>

Includes a video clip including Susan (2:14 in length)