

When looking at the calendar many see how many days until Christmas or how many days until they are off work for a Christmas break or how many days they have until the kids are out of school for the holiday break. One local man has a different outlook when he looks at the calendar. He looks at the calendar and sees a milestone, a year anniversary, of sorts.

Wayne Crumpton looks at the calendar and sees that November 26 marked his year anniversary of receiving a life-saving gift. Crumpton received a liver transplant and is still recuperating from the eight hour plus surgery. His path to the milestone was not an easy path to endure and at one point he had given up on the chance to walk out of the hospital alive.

Crumpton's journey to a new chance at life began in 2008. He was working full time and functioning as a normal, healthy adult. Crumpton had underwent shoulder surgery and was still working on getting his shoulder 100 percent from the surgery through physical therapy when he became violently ill.

"In January 2008, I began to feel ill and started vomiting up mass amounts of blood. I was rushed to the hospital and admitted. After a few days in the hospital I was told that I had cirrhosis and that my liver was so damaged that the only thing that could save me was a liver transplant," Crumpton recalled.

Originally the medical staff thought Crumpton was aware of his condition. He had no idea he had cirrhosis of the liver until the liver could not function properly.

"The only sign I had was my legs constantly were itching. I would just want to dig at them. I just thought I was having a reaction to something. I changed my laundry detergent, soap, socks, just everything," Crumpton said. "I didn't find out until later that is one of the signs."

The cirrhosis was caused by the hepatitis Crumpton had as a four year old child. He had no idea that the problem he endured as a child would one day have him on a transplant list.

He took the information and passed it on to his sister who also had the bout with hepatitis the same time Crumpton did.

"I ended up calling my sister. My mom, sister and I, all had hepatitis at the same time. I told her she needed to go to the doctor and get checked. She didn't want to but she finally did. She is fine," Crumpton stated as a smile came across his face, knowing his sister would not have to endure the same path as he has.

When Crumpton was first diagnosed with the problem, his primary care physician, Dr. Adam French, referred him to Jewish Hospital Transplant Center.

"I was put through a grueling three day battery of tests to see if I was a good candidate for a liver transplant. I was later notified that I was being placed on the list and the waiting and uncertainty began. I had to notify the transplant center anytime I was going to travel or be away from home. I had to always be near a phone in case they called," Crumpton added.

His doctors soon became more like family as Crumpton would be hospitalized dozens of times over the next three years. During the first year he went from 230 pounds to 200 pounds and at one point he was a mere 140 pounds. He kept fighting for his life but things seemed to continue to go down hill.

Eventually in February 2011 he had to file for disability because he could no longer work as a

police officer. Crumpton was the Chief of Police in Charlestown from 2000 to 2004 and since leaving the position still worked in the law enforcement field.

“Most of August and September, 2011, I was in the hospital. The last time I was in the hospital in September, I was so bad, I had accepted the fact that I was going to die. I had a feeding tube placed in me and with the help of a nurse named Joni Perry at Jewish Hospital, things began to turn around,” Crumpton recalled.

You always hear that people come into your life at the exact moment you need them, that is so the case with Nurse Perry and Crumpton.

“She was very dedicated and went well above and beyond the call of duty. She would even come back and check on me, after she was off work, before she went home. She had a great impact on my physical and mental health which helped me pull through. As fate would have it, she also lives in the Charlestown area,” Crumpton added.

Crumpton has taken the time to personally write a letter to Perry so she knows what she does daily does not go unnoticed and is not taken for granted.

“If it hadn’t been for her, I had actually decided I wasn’t getting out of the hospital this time. There are people out there who care and will help you in ways you can’t imagine,” Crumpton said.

After Perry put Crumpton back on track, he became well enough to go home. He was released on September 21, 2011. He was not home for long before receiving a phone call from Jewish. They had his liver. He was going to get his second chance after three years on the waiting list.

“After being sent home, early the next morning, around midnight, I received a call from Jewish Hospital telling me they had a liver for me. I thought someone was playing a joke on me. She finally convinced me that it was not a joke and that I needed to get to the hospital as soon as possible,” he recalled.

Thinking about the possibility of a second chance, Crumpton was too excited to wait. He ran out of the house, jumped into the car and began to back out of the driveway. Then he began to think sensibly again. He really should not be driving himself to the hospital.

“I went back into the house and tried to call my daughter and did not get an answer. My girlfriend was at work so I called her and told her to come and get me right away,” he said.

Crumpton’s girlfriend, Carol, did exactly that and they were headed to the hospital, arriving by 1 a.m. His daughter, Kelli, arrived at the hospital soon after and the process began.

After surgery, Dr. Christopher Jones advised that the surgery went well and Crumpton would be in the Intensive Care Unit for a few days. Dr. Jones also made Crumpton realize how dire his previous situation was as he probably only had about six months to live with his liver.

Crumpton, apparently has never done anything normal, and admits that himself, and this is no exception. A couple days later he had to go back into surgery due to internal bleeding and a bile duct being nicked. Both problems were repaired and he was on his way to recovery.

Crumpton’s daughter and girlfriend cared for him after he was released from the hospital some three weeks later. After being home for about a month, he became very ill again forcing him to go back into the hospital.

After learning there was a problem with the liver, Crumpton managed to take another hit in his recovery process. The bile ducts were scarring over and according to his doctor, the chances of this occurring are one in a million.

“The doctor said the donor had the problem and did not know it yet or the scarring may have occurred during death. There is no way to test for such a problem,” Crumpton explained. “The

only thing they could do was to place stents in the liver to help with the bile ducts and keep me going until I could get another liver. The doctors thought the stints might work for about six months.”

Crumpton then spent most of October and November of last year in the hospital. He was released on Thanksgiving night. He was sent home to again, wait patiently for the next gift that would save his life. The wait was not too long as Crumpton’s phone rang around 5 a.m. the next morning. Prayers had been answered and once again there was a liver for him.

The surgery again was about eight hours and according to Dr. Jones, went well. The doctor told Crumpton and his family that the liver was actually in worse shape than his original liver. After the surgery and a few weeks in the hospital, Crumpton was home and ready to take the path to recovery.

And, just like before, the path would not be easy, but he continued to fight through. After coming home from the hospital he had trouble eating. He continued to lose weight, getting down to 140 pounds, and forced back into the hospital. This time he had a feeding tube placed to help him get the much needed nutrition. Once the feeding tube was placed within a couple of months, he began to feel better. And, once again, the table turned on him. He became very ill again in July.

Crumpton was again admitted to the hospital to figure out what was the cause of his sickness. Again, the bile duct had scarred over where the new liver and bile duct were connected. The scarring left an opening only about the size of a pin hole. This required yet another surgery to place stents to open the hole to the size of a nickel. The stents were in place for about two months and were removed in early September of this year. More stents have been placed to help keep the opening at the desired level. The current stents will remain in place until next month.

“The stents are painful and at times I have to go back to the hospital due to the pain. I am on about 15 medications, some of which I will be weaned off of over the years,” Crumpton explained.

The 15 medications he is currently taking is already showing some progress. Shortly after the surgery he was taking about 30 medications. Crumpton will be taking two anti-rejection drugs for the rest of his life but he is more than willing to take those.

“It has been a long, hard road, but well worth it,” he added with a smile.

Although the road was rough and seemed hopeless at one point, Crumpton can now share his story with his friends, family and others who may not know much about organ donations.

Crumpton has been an organ donor for many years, but never thought he would be on the receiving end.

When asked what he would say to someone who may be thinking about becoming an organ donor, but not quite sure about the decision, Crumpton replied, “I would definitely try to convince them to donate. If you become an organ donor you could save up to 50 people with the heart, lungs, liver, skin, eyes. It won’t do me any good when I’m gone, but I could save someone else. There just are not enough donors out there for the number of people needing a transplant.”

Crumpton is very aware that with his success story, there had to be a tragedy to start. He has thought about what he would say to the family of his donor, if ever given the opportunity.

“First thing, I would tell them I am so sorry for their loss of a loved one but thanks so much for saving my life. I am so thankful that person or the family chose to donate the organs that saved my life,” Crumpton stated.

He just went to the doctor and received more good news. The path is becoming clearer. The

doctor visits and blood draws are becoming less frequent. His second chance and the gift of life is priceless.

"I would just want everyone to consider and think hard about being an organ donor. They just need to weigh the options and consider the possibility of saving so many people. Hopefully my story could sway some of them to be an organ donor," Crumpton said.

Being in the line of work Crumpton is, some people call him and other law enforcement officers, heroes, he has a different definition for his hero.

"The greatest hero I never knew was the organ donor that saved my life!," he stated.

Being a police officer and helping others is what Crumpton knows. It is his passion and what he wants to do but for now he will just continue working on his recovery. Doctors are optimistic that he will soon be 100 percent and able to return to work. "My case is not the normal outcome of an organ transplant. Most transplant recipients do well from the very beginning of their transplant and return to a normal life quicker. As Dr. Jones told me several times, 'I am a puzzle and harder than most to put back together.' But that is just my luck, I have always done things the hard way," Crumpton added.

A very humble Crumpton is well aware of everything that had to fall into place for him to be able to enjoy the upcoming holidays and many, many years with family and friends.

"I am very fortunate through this whole process with the doctors and all. I know it is one big miracle that all fell into place like this and this is the way it was suppose to happen. I am so grateful for everyone. Words will never be able to express how I feel," Crumpton concluded.

Being an Organ Donor is not something many people think about until they either are faced with a decision to donate or they have a loved one on a waiting list. Friends and family of Crumpton have faced the decision and many have made the decision to donate.

According to the website, www.organdonor.gov, "a person is added to the waiting list for a transplant every 10 minutes. Each day an average of 79 people receive organ transplants. However, an average of 18 people die each day waiting for transplants that can't take place because of the shortage of donated organs."

The website also breaks down the success of transplants: "As of May 4, 2009, the percentage of recipients who were still living five years after their transplant is noted below for kidney, heart, liver and lung:

*Kidney- 69.3 percent

*Heart- 74.9 percent

*Liver- 73.8 percent

*Lung- 54.5 percent"

Crumpton encourages everyone to become a donor and Donate Life! You may register to be an organ donor in Indiana by visiting www.organdonor.gov and clicking on "Becoming a Donor."

For more information about Crumpton's story or about organ donation please e-mail Wayne Crumpton at rescue9114u@aol.com.