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Volume XXXXI, Number 3

Wednesday • January 18, 2012

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New Life with a New Heart

Survivor illustrates need for organ donors

BY MINDY COOPER/
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Luther Lockett Jr. is about to celebrate his 25th year with a transplanted heart, which without, he would not be here today to watch his three grandchildren grow older.

According to Lockett, he now has two birthdays: the one his mother gave him 78-years ago when he was born, and the second one his "heavenly father" gave to him 25-years-ago, after he received a life-saving heart from an organ donor.

"We celebrate my birthday every year," he said, referring to his close-knit family, which includes his beloved wife Marie, whom

cated to educating residents of the importance of becoming a registered donor.

The mission of Donate Life Northwest is to save and enhance lives through the promotion of organ, eye, and tissue donation to ensure that everyone waiting for a transplant has the same access and opportunity to receive the organ they need.

"We are a single non-profit organization that works in collaboration and basically

These extra years have given me a beautiful granddaughter to know and love. I've got a second chance, so I live each day like it's my last.

— Luther Lockett Jr.



PHOTO BY MINDY COOPER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Luther and Marie Lockett of northeast Portland enjoy a life of family and grandchildren thanks to a heart transplant Luther received 25 years ago. The couple is encouraging residents, especially African Americans, to consider becoming an organ donor to increase the chances others will survive serious illnesses.

he has been married to for 53-years this April.

After the transplant, we renewed our vows, he said, looking over to his wife sitting quietly in their northeast Portland living room, decorated with wooden furniture, family photos and religious symbols of their faith.

"These extra years have given me a beautiful granddaughter to know and love," said Lockett. "I've got a second chance, so I live each day like it's my last."

The couple is encouraging residents, especially African Americans, to consider becoming an organ donor to increase the chances others will survive serious illnesses.

Throughout the state of Oregon, there are currently more than 859 people waiting for an organ transplant, said Mary Jane Hunt, executive director of the local non-profit Donate Life Northwest, an organization dedi-

represents the public," said Hunt. "Our message and mission is about motivating and educating people to register."

Founded in 1975, Donate Life Northwest brought together the organ, eye and tissue recovery agencies throughout the area to work together on public education.

"This is unique because most of the public education comes from those single entities," she said. "In the state of Washington and Oregon procurement provides public education."

According to the non-profit, there are about 2.2 million registered donors in Oregon.

"With the amount of progress with anti rejection drugs and the amount of the public

embracing donation, registration has really increased," she said.

The need for transplants, however, continues to grow.

There are currently 110,000 people waiting for transplants throughout the nation, she said.

"We are fortunate that in our state we have 70 percent of our residents over 18 as registered donors," she said. "But even though we have this huge number, we still have a long ways to go to improve that statistic."

Lockett was the 25th transplanted heart

recipient at OHSU.

Two weeks before his first heart attack in 1984, Lockett said he went to his annual physical examination, where no one mentioned to him that he should take precaution because of his high cholesterol.

Taking a vacation from work, Luther took his wife to Hawaii for an exotic spring break to escape the Portland rain.

"We were staying at the hotel adjacent to the mall, and dressing for a dinner cruise," he said. "My chest just started hurting, and my

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