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A donation that gives life

By CAROLYN BLACKMAN, Staff Reporter

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TORONTO — The only regret Kathy Laszlo, 48, has about donating her kidney to 20-year-old Terri Quint in June, is that she can't do it again.

Terri Quint, left, and Kathy Laszlo

"I wanted to do it, and it's done. But I can only do it once."

Laszlo, founder of DANI, Developing and Nurturing Independence, an organization that helps young adults with special needs, said she met Robyn Quint, Terri's mother, when the two carpoled to a program for their children who have special needs.

"I knew Terri wasn't well, and I offered to help."

Robyn Quint, a native of South Africa, said her family's ordeal began in December, when Terri, who had always been healthy, began to feel unwell.

"We had some tests done, and we were told Terri was in end-stage renal failure. She needed to be on dialysis."

The middle of three sisters and a student at Drewry Secondary School, Terri was on dialysis at home with the help of Humber River Regional Hospital's home dialysis unit.

"It's a huge procedure, and I took six weeks leave of absence from work for training. It's a great system, but it is not an easy road. It's hard for a 19-year-old to lie in one place for eight hours at a time," Quint said.

She said that seven or eight family members stepped forward to donate their kidney, but none were acceptable. "Whoever could [do so] got tested, but for one reason or another, they weren't right. Sometimes family is not an option."

Laszlo, who has Type O blood and is a universal donor, offered to be tested. "When they saw her blood was a match, she spent days at the hospital for further tests. We were overwhelmed by what she was doing," said Quint, whose husband, Saul, is a family doctor in Bolton, Ont.

Laszlo said it was a big decision, "but I kept thinking about the dialysis machine Terri needed to keep her alive. What I was doing was nothing compared to that. I wanted to be able to help her, and I believe that God wanted me to do this."

The whole journey was "unbelievable" Quint said. "From nowhere I had a sick child, and then a donor comes from right in our backyard. The whole [sequence of events] sideswiped us. We have all gained a very special person in our lives. After all, her kidney lives here."

She said that although Terri has a suppressed immune system, and they have to be vigilant about monitoring any illness, “she is living an absolutely normal life.”

Laszlo said a couple of people questioned her decision to donate her kidney to a young adult with special needs. “They ask why I wouldn’t give health back to someone who will someday have children or who is raising a family. That question is very hurtful to me. Every life has value, and we can’t judge who is more worthwhile. In God’s eyes, everyone’s life is the same.”

She is coming forward with her story, she said, in order to encourage people to put themselves on a donation list and to sign donor cards.

She and Terri will be speaking at an organ donor information night Oct. 19, at Chabad of Markham. For more information, contact Renewal Toronto, a non-profit organization that acts as a comprehensive resource for kidney donors and potential recipients within the Jewish community, at www.renewal.org or by e-mail at renewal@renewal.org; document.write(" "); document.write(addy_text18578); document.write(''); //-->\n , or call 416-638-7633.

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