

## HEALTH ♦ THEATRE

TORONTO

**Widow seeking living kidney donor to avoid painful dialysis****Joanne Hill**

CHIEF CORRESPONDENT

Marilyn Rosenberg shudders when she remembers what her brother went through on dialysis and tears spring to her eyes when she says a living kidney donor is her only hope.

The 69-year-old widow was diagnosed with end-stage kidney disease a little more than a year ago. She doesn't know why her kidneys are failing; maybe it's the Type 1 diabetes she's had for almost 30 years; or maybe it's genetic, since her brother and father both died of kidney failure. She is monitored regularly at the renal clinic at Toronto General Hospital. Monthly blood tests include a check of her creatinine level, which measures kidney function.

"Now my creatinine is about 18-19 per cent," said Rosenberg. "They call it end-stage kidney disease. When you're about 15 per cent they start talking to you about dialysis, so I could be facing that and I don't want to, if I can help it. This is why I'm seeking a living donor."

Patients can't be put on the waiting list for a cadaver kidney until they are on dialysis, Rosenberg explained, and then they can spend several years waiting for a match. A living donor speeds the process toward saving the recipient's life. For Rosenberg, the first step is finding a potential donor with Type B blood.

Rosenberg's three children and three other people she knows have been tested and rejected.



Marilyn Rosenberg (right), seen here with daughter Suzanne Ross, waiting for donor.

She's not part of the Facebook or Twitter generation, she said, and she's at a loss as to how to spread the word.

"I thought I would put an ad in the *Jewish Tribune*: 'Person needs a kidney! I've never seen one [like that]... Do you know if they would do that?' she asked.

John Anhang, president, Renewal Canada, said dialysis is only a temporary measure.

"There are so many medical

complications associated with dialysis and so much inconvenience and pain," said Anhang. "Medical professionals say that if you can get a kidney before you start on dialysis you're a lot better off."

Anhang runs Renewal Canada and Renewal Toronto. His main challenge is, "education of the [Jewish] community about how important this is and how permissible and

meritorious this is to do."

His work – exclusively within the Jewish community – includes helping to connect potential donors with educational and financial resources.

"People don't usually just decide if they want to be a donor: it's a process," said Anhang. "They want to learn more about it, consider it, speak to previous donors, learn about the medical risks and how long they'll be off work, etc."

Rosenberg follows a strict diet and takes a lot of medication, including regular injections to raise her hemoglobin.

"Having kidney disease makes you very tired," she said. "I don't have energy: I'm on a strict regimen of medications," as tears fill her eyes she adds with resolve, "trying to survive."

The hardest part for her family is not being able to give her one of their kidneys, said Rosenberg's daughter, Suzanne Ross. She emphasized that others in the Jewish community also desperately need a living kidney donation.

"It's not just happening to our family: it's happening to many families. There are many people who need to be helped. Open your mind and open your heart," Ross urged.

For more information about the Living Kidney Donor Program at the University Health Network, visit [www.uhn.on.ca/Focus\\_of\\_Care/MOT/Kidney/living\\_kidney\\_donor.asp](http://www.uhn.on.ca/Focus_of_Care/MOT/Kidney/living_kidney_donor.asp).

To learn more about Renewal Canada call (416) 894-5670 or email [toronto@renewal.org](mailto:toronto@renewal.org).