

OBITUARIES

Kevin LeBlanc's 'Gift of Life' Gives Others Second Chance

Michigan Residents Await Transplants

An individual's love, generosity, and decision to donate has given others a second chance at life. Kevin LeBlanc, 43, of Sault Ste. Marie, passed away at War Memorial Hospital in Sault Ste. Marie August 1, 2006, following a sudden respiratory and cardiac arrest July 28. He had made his wishes known to his wife and family that he desired to be an organ donor, and in an operation that was the first of its kind at War Memorial Hospital, operating room personnel from the hospital, along with a specialized team from the University of Michigan, worked in cooperation with Gift of Life of Michigan to carry out his wishes. Three patients awaiting liver and kidneys will be helped. Heart valves, corneas, and bone will assist up to 54 more individuals and pancreatic research will be aided by the donation as well.

Mr. LeBlanc, a lifetime resident of the Eastern Upper Peninsula and member of the Bay Mills Indian Community, was known for his willingness to assist others. In 1995, Mr. LeBlanc was assisting a stranded motorist along an exit ramp and was struck by a vehicle, leaving him with a severe cervical spine injury and resulting quadriplegia and seizures. Mr. LeBlanc was cared for by his wife, Kris, and family and friends during the years since the accident. His continued willingness to assist others also led to the adoption of a son, Brody, now 6, and active involvement in parenting of a daughter, Lacey, and



Kevin LeBlanc

a son, Damien.

Mr. LeBlanc was employed at Hiawatha Correctional Facility from 1988 to 1995 and served in the U.S. Army from 1980 to 1983. He was involved in City League basketball, enjoyed sports, and loved listening to music.

In addition to his wife and children, he is survived by his parents, Gene and Luella Raymond of Sault Ste. Marie; grandparents Clayton Parish of Brimley, Beatrice Wilson of Kinross, and Sylvia Raymond of Rogers City; three sisters, Rochelle Menominee of Brimley, Annette Olsen of Milton, Wisconsin, and Charlene LeBlanc of Sault Ste. Marie; two brothers, Darrell LeBlanc of Brimley, and Gerald LeBlanc of St. Louis, Michigan; and his father- and mother-in-law, Aaron and Joan Hopper of Sault Ste. Marie.

"Our condolences, prayers, and appreciation go out to Kevin, his family, and friends" said David Jahn, War Memorial Hospital's President/CEO in a written state-

ment. "The skill and compassion of our staff, physicians, and Gift of Life partners are very much appreciated."

"On behalf of all those whose lives have been changed forever, we are eternally grateful. Kevin died as he lived, a true hero," said Penny Colthurst of Donor Family Services at Gift of Life Michigan.

War Memorial Hospital has coordinated with Gift of Life of Michigan for years and through these efforts has assisted with several tissue donations. This donation is the first at War Memorial Hospital involving organs.

Gift of Life is the only nonprofit full service organ and tissue recovery organization in Michigan. The Gift of Life acts as an intermediary between the donor hospital and the recipient transplant center, providing all of the services necessary for organ and tissue donation.

As of August 1, there are 3,090 Michigan residents currently awaiting a transplant; nationally there are more than 87,000 people waiting. Every day, hundreds of additional Michigan residents are in need of other tissues such as heart valves, veins, tendons, bone, and corneas to survive or maintain their quality of life, Gift of Life reported.

In 2005, 269 organ donors were recorded in Michigan, up from 171 in 1995. In the twelve years from 1994 to 2005, there have been 2,467 Michigan organ donors. Behind these numbers are people - donors, donor families and friends, recipients, recipient families and friends, and the medical teams.

More information on Gift of Life, organ and tissue donation can be obtained at www.giftoflife.michigan.org. The Web site offers access to the online Gift of Life Donor Registry. People can receive further information by calling (800) 482-4881. This registry is a confidential, 24 hours a day, computerized database that documents a person's wishes regarding organ, tissue, and eye donation.

Even when a person signs the donor registry, it is essential that he make his family aware of his wishes, Gift of Life reports.

It is also helpful if a Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare is designated. "Kevin had a living trust and durable power of attorney. I wouldn't have been so confident without it," said Kris LeBlanc.

Services for Mr. LeBlanc were held Monday, August 7, at 11 a.m. at St. Mary's ProCathedral Church in Sault Ste. Marie.

Alice Heisler

Alice M. (nee Brown) McCoy Heisler of Sault Ste. Marie was a former resident of Kincheloe and Ohio.

Mrs. Heisler was 63 when she died August 1, 2006, at Marquette General Hospital in Marquette, ending a short illness.

She was born in Alliance, Ohio, January 10, 1943, to Francis John and Marilyn Louise (nee Hillman) Franzini.

For 27 years, she lived in Alliance, Ohio, and worked at an automotive assembly plant. In 1986, she moved to Kincheloe, and then moved to Sault Ste. Marie in 2001. She was a member of the Sault

Ste. Marie Veterans of Foreign Wars.

She is survived by one sister, Joan Pucci, many nieces, nephews, and cousins, all of Ohio, as well as many friends in Michigan and Ohio.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Joseph McCoy, her mother, Marilyn Brown, and by her Uncle Elmer and Aunt Ruby Miller, who reared her.

Inurnment will be at Fairmont Memorial Cemetery in Alliance, Ohio, near her husband.

Reamer Galer Funeral Home of Pickford is assisting the family with arrangements.

'La Traviata' To Be Performed

The three-act opera "La Traviata," composed by Giuseppe Verdi, will be performed at the Cheboygan Opera House Saturday, August 12, and Sunday, August 13.

Saturday's show will begin at 7:30 p.m., while Sunday's show will start at 2 p.m.

The play is based on another play called the "La Dame aux Camelias," which was composed by Alexandre Dumas in 1852. The opera will be sung in Italian.

The event is presented by the Cheboygan Arts Council.

The opera will be performed by students of the Bay View Summer Music Festival. "La Traviata" is directed by Brian Robertson. Timothy Cheek is the musical director and conductor.

Tickets are available through The Cheboygan Opera House. Arts Council tickets are \$15. Non-member tickets are \$18. For students through 12th grade, tickets are \$8. For more information, call (231) 627-5432.

Research Continuing on Millecoquins Lake

By Paul Gingras

"Lake Millecoquins is a fish factory," said Jim Rutledge, a member of the Lake Millecoquins Improvement Committee, an organization struggling to discover a method to control the lake's massive aquatic weed growth without damaging Garfield Township's premier recreational area. The weed is common water milfoil and it is choking the lake.

Following a July 12 public meeting at the Naubinway Pavilion concerning lake conditions, the committee decided to combine mechanical harvesting with chemical treatment to reduce the weeds, but no sooner had Mr. Rutledge delivered this decision to the Garfield Township Board of Trustees than further research brought the plan to a halt.

Continuing research led Mr. Rutledge to Dr. Doug Pullman of the Flint-based Aquest Corporation. Dr. Pullman said the milfoil may be a hybrid that could regenerate at an exceptionally high rate if disturbed. Now, the lake board is waiting on the results of Dr. Pullman's DNA sampling to find out how the weeds are likely to respond to mechanical harvesting.

"Before we do anything, we want to know what we're dealing with," Mr. Rutledge said. "I thought we were finished when we talked to the township, but we're back to the drawing board. That's all right, though. The last thing we want to do is make things worse."

Research on the lake has been intense. At the public meeting, the lake board presented the findings of Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, a group which conducted a grid survey in May to generate ideas for managing the lake's overgrowth of native plants, like common milfoil. Lake Millecoquins, Mr. Rutledge said, does not have Eurasian milfoil, a non-native cousin that has infected Cedarville Bay and many inland lakes in the state.

Tip of the Mitt, which focuses on natural solutions to environmental problems, recommended mechanical harvesting, but the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also warned the committee that fragmentation of the milfoil could cause it to spread and worsen.

Ninety-six percent of the lake bottom is covered with weeds, which is unusual, Mr. Rutledge said. Further, the lake is shaped like a bowl. There are no deep channels or drop-offs, so light reaches the bottom. This allows 40 percent of lake floor to fill with common milfoil. The rest hosts a variety of 30 to 40 native weeds.

Chemical treatment also presents its own set of problems, Mr. Rutledge added.

The Lake Improvement Committee doesn't want to pursue a course of action that could lead to

a problem, and members don't feel they can safely treat more than 100 acres a year. Lake Millecoquins contains 1,800 acres, and even if the committee could afford to treat the entire lake at once, it would effectively kill everything, Mr. Rutledge said.

When weeds die, they contribute to the aging of the lake, he explained. Dead material furthers its transition into a marsh ecosystem, and this would be a significant loss for Garfield Township, because Lake Millecoquins is a tremendous fishery right now, he said.

To enhance the fishery, the DNR will plant 35,000 young walleye every two years, and a bullhead removal program is also in place. Bullheads are "rough fish" that feed on the eggs of game fish.

"We removed 1,000 pounds of them this spring," Mr. Rutledge said. "This year, there have been a lot of bluegill, perch, and other species of game fish."

The premature aging of Lake Millecoquins may also be fueled by a dam installed in 1965.

"Basically, it is just a rock pile," Mr. Rutledge said, "a big rock pile. There is no way to adjust the water level, so the lake can't clean itself out."

Rather than being flushed out each year, the water level rises every spring, bringing in large amounts of sediment that settles to the bottom. This sediment fuels the next batch of weeds. A modern dam would include means to adjust the lake level during times of high flow, reducing sedimentation and possibly slowing the proliferation of weeds that is aging the lake, he added.

The Hiawatha Sportsman's Club, whose members own approximately two-thirds of the shoreline, have contributed to the improvement of Lake Millecoquins. At the regular township meeting, Monday, July 17, the club's board amended its budget to include a \$5,761.21 donation to pay for the Tip of the Mitt study.

The lake improvement committee is holding off on raising more money until a control method can be agreed on. It hopes to bring Dr. Pullman to Garfield Township for a closer look.

"We can't seek grants until we have specific plan of action," Mr. Rutledge said. "We should have that before the end of summer."

Once the plan is in place, the township board will apply for the grants on behalf of the Lake Improvement Committee, said Linda Bennett, township clerk.

'Dinner with the John Johnstons' Playing at LSSU

"Dinner with the John Johnstons," a play about an 1823 dinner party featuring many Sault Ste. Marie residents of 1823, will be performed Friday, August 18, and Saturday, August 19, at 6 p.m. at the Lake Superior State University Cislser Center Crow's Nest in Sault Ste. Marie.

Tickets cost \$20 each. The play is a fundraiser for the Chippewa County Historical Society. Tickets are available at the Chamber of Commerce office and at the Historical Society office at 409 Ashmun Street.

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