

APRIL IS "DONATE LIFE" MONTH

BY BRENDA FISHBAUGH

In my January column, I wrote about the passing of John Ratliff and how his wife, Sara, donated his organs to benefit others. At a January tanning trade event, I met North Carolina salon owners Robin and Steve Setliff who wanted me to know that living people can donate organs, too; the couple is learning about live organ donation the hard way. Here is their story.

"On March 15, 2005 our life dramatically changed," recalls Robin through tears. "Our 15-year-old daughter, Brittany, we call her Britt, had flu-like systems that worsened and we had to call the paramedics to our house. She was rushed to the hospital." The teen was hospitalized for two weeks and it was only at the end of her stay that doctors finally had a diagnosis – polycystic kidney disease (PKD). Fluid-filled cysts were growing on Britt's kidneys and multiplying on top of each other. Soon, the cysts would engulf the kidney, stop the blood flow and actually kill her kidneys – and her – if she doesn't receive a donor kidney.

Britt has one kidney functioning at only 15 percent and her second kidney is non-functioning. Now, at 21 years old, she is on the Critical Need transplant list. "A person doesn't have to die to donate a kidney," said Robin. "If you have Type 'O' blood, your kidney may be a match for Brittany and save our daughter's life."

April is National Donate Life month. The goal is to increase awareness of the fact that a living person can donate a kidney, liver or bone marrow. "Brittany's


insurance would pay for the surgery – the donor pays nothing," explains Steve Setliff. "Recovery time is about two weeks and there are no drugs or anything special the donor has to do afterward. The donor is just special because they've saved a life." Brittany may go on dialysis until a kidney can be found, but the treatments require her to be connected to machines 20 hours a week, which will make her feel even more exhausted than she does now.

Before Brittany's "flu" six years ago, she had absolutely no symptoms of PKD. She was the "flier" on her high school's cheerleading squad and dreamed of attending the University of North Carolina and becoming a UNC cheerleader. Now 21, Brittany needs to live at home because she's at risk. She can't stand for long periods and can't bend over, so she can't even work a couple of hours in her parent's tanning salon. With lots of help from the high school, and tutors at home and in the hospital, Britt graduated and even started taking college courses. She started as a disabled student and they accommodated her schedule, so she had the college experience. Britt was able to finish a semester before her health declined to an unacceptable level.

Robin and Steve haven't been idle throughout this family crisis. They held a huge "Beat it Britt" fundraiser and had raffles and silent auctions for products donated by tanning industry companies including Norvell, Eye Pro, Devoted Creations, Australian Gold, Supre Tan and Fiesta Sun. The event had over 100 sponsors and raised \$3,500. They also offered three days of free tanning at their salons and free Norvell spray tans to bring in another \$2,000 in donations. Generous donors received free lotion and eye protection.

What would Britt do if someone gave her their kidney? "I'd like to go back to college to study some aspect of medicine," she says. "And I'd love to live on my own or get into a

dorm. I've not really dated, as I don't want to get attached to a guy and have them get attached to me, and then I die."

What can you do to help? Britt, Steve and Robin ask for your prayers. And, they've established a foundation to cover the mounting medical expenses not covered by insurance. You can send your tax deductible donation to the Beat it Britt Foundation, c/o Robin Brock, Southern Community Bank, 3151 Peters Creek Pkwy., Winston-Salem NC 27127, tel 336.785.3570. You can also donate to the Polycystic Kidney Disease Foundation (PKD.com) in Brittany's honor. This money won't go to Britt, but it will fund research in her name. And, you can be tested to see if you can be a living donor and save Brittany. Offer support by friending Brittany on Facebook-Beat it Britt. 



(L-R) The Setliff family includes Brittany, Steve, Robin & Brandon. The couple has co-owned two Island Tans salons in Winston-Salem, NC for 12 years.





EYE PRO

Tanning industry veteran Brenda Fishbaugh is president of Eye Pro, Inc., makers of disposable eyewear. She travels extensively training salons on the effects of UV light on vision.