Flora’s Story – A Grateful Recipient

Pre-reading

Questions:

• What might this reading be about?
• What is a grateful recipient?

Definitions:

• Grateful – feeling thankful for something good that has happened
• Rare – not common; not often seen
• Pulmonary – of or relating to the lungs
• Transplant – to transfer an organ or body part from one person to another by surgery

Reading

My illness first attacked when I was in college. I was just 18 years old. I was having shortness of breath. At first I thought it was because it was winter and the cold hit my throat. The episodes of shortness of breath didn’t go away. They got worse. I was diagnosed with a rare pulmonary disease. I was treated with medications that had more side effects than I could count. I felt horrible. Each flare-up would leave me worse off than before. Then I was placed on oxygen.

At first, I used oxygen part-time, about 14 to 16 hours a day. After 4 years of dragging around a tank, I had a bout of pneumonia. This caused me to need oxygen 24 hours a day. I used it to walk, sleep, eat and shower. I also had to use it during my work.

I could no longer hide my illness from strangers. My coloring was blue, although friends recall that I had a more grayish tone. I could hardly walk. To go just one or two blocks meant stopping many times to catch my breath.

My illness assailed me for almost 23 years until I became so ill that a transplant was my only option. After being on the waiting list for 22 month and 8 days, I received a single lung transplant on August 23, 1995. That first summer a friend threw a birthday party for me and I was able to blow out the candles!

Now, thanks to the generosity and compassion of my organ donor family, I work full-time, go to the gym three or four times a week, serve on local and national transplant committees, and still have plenty of time to have fun.

I used to wonder how much longer I would have survived without a transplant. I no longer wonder – I simply know that I’ve been blessed with many new years.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – www.organdonor.gov; Flora Solarz, Organ Recipient Story and image
Understanding

1. What were the first symptoms of Flora’s illness? _____________________________________________

2. What was her diagnosis? ________________________________________________________________

3. How long was she on the transplant list? _________________________________________________

4. What organ did she receive? _____________________________________________________________

5. How did the new organ impact her life? _____________________________________________________

6. What are side effects? ________________________________________________________________

7. What was Flora’s life like before she received the transplant? _______________________________

Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: What are your thoughts about organ donation? Do you know someone who needs a transplant, or someone that has received one? What is his/her situation?