Transplant offers chance for ‘normal’ childhoo.

Just because Lexi Simants hasn’t been in school with her classmates in Brady for a few weeks doesn’t mean she is taking a vacation from homework.

The fifth-grader is 290 miles away, working to master multiplication of decimals, even though math is her least favorite subject.

“I like science,” the 11-year-old says. “I want to go back to school.”

School will likely wait at least a couple more weeks, though. Doctors in Aurora, CO, want to make sure Lexi is stable and her medications are adjusted correctly before they send her home following a kidney transplant on March 25.

“I really miss my grandma and grandpa,” Lexi says, “and even my brothers.”

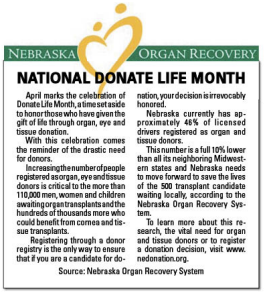
Lexi is the daughter of Scott and Becky Simants who live north of Gothenburg next to Becky’s parents Bill and Marlene Fleischer.

Becky is a guidance counselor and special education teacher in Brady while Scott works for Union Pacific Railroad.

In the summer of 2008, the Simants family learned Lexi's kidneys were not flushing enough waste from her body.

At that time, blood tests revealed a creatine level of 2.1.

Becky said a normal adult female's creatine is approximately 1.9 and an 11-year-old girl's should measure 0.8 to 0.9.



NEBRASKA ORGAN RECOVERY

NATIONAL DONATE LIFE MONTH

April marks the celebration of Donate Life Month, a time set aside to honor those who have given the gift of life through organ, eye and tissue donation.

With this celebration comes the reminder of the drastic need for donors.

Increasing the number of people registered as organ, eye and tissue donors is critical to the more than 110,000 men, women and children awaiting organ transplants and the hundreds of thousands more who could benefit from cornea and tissue transplants.

Registering through a donor registry is the only way to ensure that if you are a candidate for donation, your decision is irrevocably honored.

Nebraska currently has approximately 46% of licensed drivers registered as organ and tissue donors.

This number is a full 10% lower than all its neighboring Midwestern states and Nebraska needs to move forward to save the lives of the 500 transplant candidate waiting locally, according to the Nebraska Organ Recovery System.

To learn more about this research, the vital need for organ and tissue donors or to register a donation decision, visit www.nedonation.org.

Source: Nebraska Organ Recovery System

Lexi was tired all the time and spent a lot of time going back and forth to the bathroom.

Lexi saw a specialist in Omaha that summer and got a second opinion from a pediatric nephrologist in Colorado.

"At that time we were told she could lead a normal life with elevated creatine levels," Becky said. "We were told to have her creatine checked every six months and come back if it increased more than a point."

Last July, Lexi's creatine shot up to 4.6 and two weeks later it reached 5.7.

“Those were pretty scary numbers,” Becky said.

That’s when doctors broke the news that Lexi would require a kidney transplant or face regular dialysis.

Several steps had to be taken before Lexi could even be considered for a kidney transplant.

Becky said she had to have all new immunizations, have her teeth and eyes checked for any possible infections and maintain a specialized diet containing no phosphorus.

By November 2010, Lexi had met all of the requirements and she was placed on the inactive donor list.

“That means they put all her data on the national donor recipient list but then she had to gain points to be moved to the active list,” Becky said.

Points are earned while preparing the body for a transplant, she explained. There’s an extensive list of requirements that must be met to gain points and move up. Lexi compiled points faster because of her age, Becky said.

In January, she moved to the active donor list.

In the meantime, medications were increased to keep Lexi’s kidneys functioning.

“They were really hoping to be able to do a transplant before she had to start dialysis,” Becky said.

The cutoff for the creatine level before dialysis is 6.0. Becky said the last test done before the transplant indicated a level at 6.7.

BENEFIT SUPPER

While the Simants family has health insurance to help cover the cost of Lexi's transplant and recovery, it does not pay for everything.

For instance, the co-pay on medications for one week costs approximately $100.

To help with some of the medical and living expenses, elementary teachers at Brady Public School have organized a couple of benefits.

The "Loot for Lexi" campaign has raised more than $1,500 so far with donations still being taken.

The elementary staff will also host a benefit spaghetti supper from 5 to 8:30 p.m. on Monday, May 2, in the school cafeteria.

The supper is open to anyone and a free-will donation will be collected for the Simants family.

SEND SUPPORT

Lexi Simants and her parents are staying with relatives in Denver through the critical portion of Lexi's recovery. Their mailing address is: 3871 S. Quebec Street, Denver, CO 80237.

Lexi also has a care page on the Internet. Go to www.carepages.com and search for the "wildmustangs" page. Lexi can receive web messages there.

Becky was on her way home from school on March 24 when she received a call that a kidney matching Lexi's O+ blood type and two of the six antigens was available. Scott and Becky had roughly five hours before Lexi was expected to be at Children's Hospital in Aurora, CO.

"Our bags were already packed," Becky said, "but I don't know how prepared a person can really be for a call like that."

Lexi went into surgery at 3:30 p.m. the next day.

"I can't even put into words how we felt waiting," Becky said of the five hours Lexi was in surgery. "We were entirely helpless."

Nurses called Scott and Becky every hour to give them updates.

At 8:20 p.m., Lexi was wheeled back into

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