

HEALTH

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"When you're on the waiting list, you think, 'Have they forgotten about me?' But I know they haven't because Frank keeps calling me, and I know I'm still in the registry."

— Lisa Cunningham, a patient on the heart transplant waiting list



MARVIN FONG | THE PLAIN DEALER

"After I got my heart and started to feel better, I thought the hardest time for me was waiting at home, never hearing from anybody," says Holly Mulkerin, who, after waiting 2½ years for a heart, started the volunteer calling program for heart transplant patients at the Cleveland Clinic.

Volunteers make the wait easier for those on heart transplant list

CASEY CAPACHI | Plain Dealer Reporter

The morning began like any other for Frank Bianchi of Brunswick. The 56-year-old former steelworker awoke at about 5, ran for an hour on his treadmill and proceeded to carry out his daily duties as a self-proclaimed professional volunteer. | Every day, Bianchi, who lost his vision after a brain aneurysm at age 28, phones several of the 35 individuals on his list. Each is waiting for a heart transplant, just as he was 3 years ago.

Bianchi checks in with them at least once a month, as part of a volunteer program started by his close friend Holly Mulkerin of Medina, who received her new heart at the Cleveland Clinic on the same day Bianchi did. Mulkerin, 55 and a retired hospital technician, and Bianchi live only four miles apart, but they did not know each other before their transplants.

Mulkerin says she wanted to call others during "the hardest time" of the waiting process, when they're at home and unsure if they will ever receive a new heart.

"On the first call, we explain why we're calling as a volunteer but to also let them know that 'I've been where you've been. I've gone through what you're feeling.' What to expect if you're having a hard day and wondering if this is normal," says Mulkerin.

"We can answer those questions a doctor can't."

Bianchi hears the phone ring a few times before Lisa Cunningham picks up at her parents' home in Powell, Tenn. She says she's always happy to see Bianchi's number on caller ID. Especially on a day like today, when she's feeling nauseous and praying it's not another infection.

Cunningham chats with Bianchi and tells him that her husband took their daughter to a national fiddle championship while she remained at home to rest.

It's common, says Bianchi, that patients want to talk about nonmedical matters. Many have become friends, and he continues to check in and arrange lunch dates with them months after their surgeries.

"I'm so happy that [my daughter]



GUS CHAN | THE PLAIN DEALER

Frank Bianchi plays with his family dog, Shiloh, in his Brunswick home. Shiloh is not a guide dog, but he follows Bianchi throughout his daily activities, from washing the family car to sitting with him as he calls patients on the heart transplant list.

gets to see all of the things that I never got to see. They saw Big Faithful," says Cunningham, telling Bianchi about her husband and daughter's road trip through Yellowstone.

"You're going to get to do those things," Bianchi says firmly. "You're going to have a new heart."

In Ohio, there are over 140 people waiting for a heart transplant, according to Lifebanc.

The Clinic performs 50 to 60 heart transplants a year, says Kay Kendall,

a social worker with the heart transplant program at the Clinic. The program began in 1984 and since then has performed over 1,580 transplants.

When you're placed on the waiting list, says Mulkerin, "You are put in a state of limbo."

"I thought when I was home waiting, 'It sure would be nice if somebody called me every now and then,'" laughs Mulkerin, who waited 2 years for her heart.

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STRETCHING OUT

Running 100 miles in a week is risky but rewarding



ZACHARY LEWIS

What I did last week I do not recommend. In fact, I advise against it, heartily.

And yet, risky as it was, running 100 miles in a single week made for an interesting experiment, an

enlightening test of my body and a revealing glimpse of what it's like to be a pro.

Make no mistake: This was a foolhardy, even dangerous, project. Having never run more than 50 miles in a week, I was in no position to make such a leap.

It's a wonder I didn't injure myself, frankly. Had I played it more

safely, I would have worked up to a 100-mile week in 10 percent increments, over the course of several months.

But a lifestyle change wasn't my goal. All I wanted was to spend one freakish week pretending to be an Olympian, learning whether high-volume training is doable or, better yet, beneficial, for a mortal like me.

The former question I can answer definitively: yes, but not without sacrifice. I reached 100, but to get there, I had to average some 15 miles — over half a marathon — every single day. Even beyond the physical toll, the investment of time was enormous. Definitely not sustainable with a full-time job and two children.

As to the potential benefit, well, I

won't know for certain until my next long race. I suspect one week isn't enough to do me any lasting good. Then again, who knows? Maybe it is.

Volume training, for those who've never heard of it, is pretty much what it sounds like: To gain strength, you simply need to spend more time on your feet. Speed, in this philosophy, takes second place to overall mileage.

The challenge is recovery. Whereas most running schedules include days off and ample time for cross-training and "recovery runs," the busy amateur enjoys few such luxuries.

The way I did it, with single long runs every day, afforded my legs at least a little peace. I stretched and massaged every evening, got a good

night's rest, and felt more or less decent the following afternoon.

Many 100-milers, however, are forced by nonrunning obligations into morning and evening segments, thereby doubling the physical stress. Still others in my shoes might have broken up the distance into three or four marathon-length runs, which I think would have been even tougher.

Pace fell by the wayside, of course. Desperate not to injure myself, I ran most of the 100 miles two to three minutes slower than usual. Had I been more accustomed to such a heavy load, I'd have varied things up a bit and run a handful of miles fast, several more at average speed and the rest slowly.

SEE STRETCH | E4

Healthy Living

ELLEN KLEINERMAN



Snuffing smoke on school grounds

There's no smoking inside schools housing grades kindergarten through 12th because a 6-year-old Ohio law prohibits indoor smoking in all public buildings and places of employment.

But can parents waiting for children, or employees on break, smoke on the grounds or in their cars parked on school property?

It depends on the school district.

Linda Diamond, who is a member of the Tobacco-Free Delaware County Coalition, would like that answer to be a categorical, statewide "No," and she is taking steps to make that happen.

Members of the Delaware coalition were instrumental in persuading the Ohio Board of Education to adopt a proposal calling for all school property to be tobacco-free, which includes everything from smoking cigars and cigarettes to chewing tobacco. The policy covers grounds around buildings housing any grades as well as school board complexes.

"We worked to get all the school systems in Delaware County to go tobacco-free campuswide. Then we thought: 'Wouldn't it be nice for all schools in the state to have the same advantage?'" said Diamond, who also is development director of the Delaware General Health District.

The proposal was introduced to the state board in July 2010. A study committee was formed, and the model policy received unanimous approval a year later.

"It was impressive that Republicans and Democrats came together on this very important health issue," Diamond said. "But the state board cannot force individual districts to adopt this policy. Each school board has to take separate action."

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YOUR HEALTH: SAVING MONEY



PLAIN DEALER FILE PHOTOGRAPH

About 2,000 people showed up at the MedWorks vision clinic last year.

Make appointment for free eye exam

If you're hoping to get one of the 400 or so appointments for free eye exams — and glasses — at the MedWorks vision clinic on Saturday, Sept. 22, in Cleveland, hang on to these numbers: 216-858-6250 and 1-877-790-7370.

Volunteers will answer those lines beginning at 10 a.m. Wednesday. They'll close the phone lines when all appointment times have been booked.

The nonprofit health organization turned hundreds of people away from a similar event in 2011, so it's taking appointments this time.

Ophthalmologists, optometrists, opticians and other volunteers will staff the vision clinic from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the W.O. Walker Center, 10524 Euclid Ave., with 10 eye-exam stations running all day. Some glasses can be made that day, but many will be distributed later.

More information is available at medwork.susa.org or by calling 216-231-5350.

MedWorks was founded as a way to provide free care to people in need in Northeast Ohio without regard to income, insurance status or citizenship. It held its first clinic in 2009.

— Diane Suchetka

We welcome your ideas. If you know of free or low-cost care, send an email to savingmoney@plaind.com or mail a note to *Saving Money*, The Plain Dealer, 1801 Superior Ave., Cleveland, OH 44114.

My Cleveland Smartphone Movie Contest

Is your Cleveland exciting? An old home or new locale? A place you love? A place you want to improve? A place you want others to know? Show us your Cleveland in our My Cleveland Smartphone Movie Contest, sponsored by The Plain Dealer, cleveland.com and Positively Cleveland. From now until Friday, Oct. 5, show your Cleveland love by uploading a one-minute movie made on your smartphone to cleveland.com/myclevelandcontest. A panel of judges from The Plain Dealer, cleveland.com and Positively Cleveland will evaluate the best films and choose three winners to be announced in The Plain Dealer's Friday magazine on Oct. 19. Log on for rules and prize information, and to view the entries.

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