

# Zenas woman gains support

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



Bryce Mayer

### Lung transplant candidate hopes to regain more normal life soon

The prospect of a double lung transplant is more exciting than worrisome for Cindy McCullough.

After years of living with lung disease, the Zenas area woman is looking forward to a life without severe restrictions that have limited her activities.

"Not having to drag an oxygen tank around with me everywhere I go and not running out of breath, that's going to be wonderful," said McCullough, 54.

She's not there yet, though. McCullough has yet to be placed on the national transplant list. Her doctors have indicated that will probably be this summer. Then the average wait for a matching donor is 18 months.

A fundraising campaign through Help Hope Live, a nonprofit, is now



Cindy McCullough, left, with her husband, Malvin, and neighbor, Gordennell Griner, inside Union Flat Rock Church, take a break between Sunday School and worship service Sunday morning. A portrait of the history church is at the left. — Staff Photo by Bryce Mayer

underway to help cover McCullough's uninsured medical expenses, which will be considerable. So far, around \$2,700 of the \$20,000 goal has been raised. Donations go to the Great Lakes Transplant Fund, a pool that helps all in the group awaiting transplants.

The medical name of McCullough's ailment is non-CF bronchiectasis.

"I have all the symptoms of cystic fibrosis, but not the CF gene," she said. "Essentially, the airways in my lungs have become so scarred after decades of repeated respiratory infections that they are no longer able to forcefully clear excess congestion. Over time infections have settled in

the congestion I can't cough out and further diminished my health."

Complicating her health even more is the fact McCullough was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis around four years ago. That disability led to her resignation from Grote Industries in Madison in early 2016. She also had to give up her volunteer position as the spay-neuter transport director for Mercy Rescue and Adoption.

"I think the world of Cindy," said Gordennell Griner, a neighbor and friend. "She is a very nice person and has done a lot for the community."

Added Lori Kendrick, another friend, "I miss working with Cindy who

was so good at Mercy Rescue. We are all doing what we can to support her so she can get her transplant."

McCullough and her husband, Malvin, have resided in the Zenas area for 26 years, along with Cindy's brother, Brad. Malvin, who is self employed as a farm equipment mechanic, is also pastor of Union Flat Rock Baptist Church on the Jennings-Ripley county line.

As the preacher's wife, Cindy is a big part of the historic church where she serves unofficially as the worship facilitator. The church dates back to 1843 when it was organized as the Freewill Baptist Church. The church

was part of the Underground Railroad, which is indicated by a state historical marker in front of the handsome brick structure on the banks of Flat Rock Creek, a tributary of the nearby Muscatatuck River.

"We are a small congregation with around 30 to 40 active members," Cindy said. "My husband is basically a full-time pastor, though, and is full time at his other job, too. He's really busy with his ag repair business, especially this time of year."

Before moving to Jennings County, Cindy McCullough lived mostly in Madison, and also in Washington state, Ohio and Kentucky.

"I was never a smoker, but my parents were," she said.

By the time she was 16, McCullough began experiencing lung issues.

"It was like clockwork. Every spring and fall, I'd develop pneumonia and go in the hospital," she said. "When I was diagnosed (with non-CF bronchiectasis), my doctor said I have the lungs of an 80-year-old smoker."

McCullough has been on oxygen for almost two years now and can hardly wait to shed that burden.

"Ideally I will have more lung capacity, better lung health, and be able to lead a more normal life after receiving implants," she said. "The downside is I will have to take a lot of anti-rejection drugs, but

I'm ready for that."

The prognosis for that is good, too.

"Cindy and I were on a Mercy Rescue transport in Bloomington where we talked to a man who had a double lung transplant," Kendrick said. "He told us how much better he felt immediately after his surgery. There is hope."

McCullough is most grateful to Kendrick, Griner and all who are supporting her in her journey to improved health.

"It has been amazing," McCullough said. "I have suddenly realized that I have all these connections with so many good people involved in my life who are supporting me. That's a very good feeling."

Kendrick is putting on a "Paint Pourty" to help raise more money at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, June 25, at the Hayden Historical Museum. Email her at [blekendrick@yahoo.com](mailto:blekendrick@yahoo.com) to register. (More details will be in this week's *Plain Dealer*.)

Another fundraiser, an off-road vehicle ride, is planned for Sunday, July 28, starting and ending at the Union Flat Rock Baptist Church, which is located at 6303 N. CR 975W/Flat Rock Road in Ripley County.

Donations can also be made online by visiting <https://helphopelive.org/campaign/15694/>.