

WHO BETTER THAN THE HOCKEY COMMUNITY TO COME TOGETHER & GET CANADIANS



FIRED UP ABOUT ORGAN DONATION

We all know Don Cherry, the colourful, tell-it-like-it-is host of "Coach's Corner" on Hockey Night in Canada. What you may not know is that when Don was coaching the Boston Bruins in the 1970s, the Cherry family faced a major crisis: 15-year-old Tim Cherry was diagnosed with kidney disease.

Don said, "Timothy was playing and I noticed his feet were swelling. I thought it was new running shoes or getting hit by a puck or something."

After a visit to the doctor, Tim immediately went on dialysis. "I had no idea what dialysis even meant. We found out awful fast. You don't really know anything about kidney disease or dialysis until it hits home," said Don.

"Dialysis was tough on Tim," notes Don, admitting he was scared and frustrated that he couldn't help. "I was a chicken, and I let my wife Rose handle it."

"One day Rose said, 'That's it! No 15-year-old old boy should have to go through this. One of us is giving a kidney.'" Sister Cindy ended up being Tim's best match. "They were like twins. You couldn't tell the difference," their dad said.

Cindy, just 21 at the time, travelled from Kingston where she was attending college, to Boston. When the nephrologist asked Cindy if she was sure she wanted to donate, she responded, "There's no question." Today Cindy jokes, "We aren't a gushy, overly-emotional family, but we do give kidneys."

"I never realized the seriousness of it all until I saw both of them going down the aisle for surgery," Don said. After the transplant, Don remembers watching Tim's colour come back. "I hadn't seen the colour in over a year. To see his cheeks rosy red again was incredible. We thank God every day for it. That was 40 years ago and he's going strong."

Tim, a successful hockey scout and video producer, remembers his experiences vividly. "My first day on dialysis was one I will never forget. As I sank into the routine of being hooked up to a

dialysis machine every other day, I started to wonder if I'd ever see light at the end of the tunnel. No matter how strong of mind or spirit you are, it slowly starts to wear you down. For me, the talk of a transplant brought back some hope," he said. "When I got the kidney from Cindy, I realized I didn't have to go on that machine and that's when I first appreciated the miracle of receiving the gift of life."

What stands out for Cindy is "how quickly we rebounded. Tim and I broke a record (at the time) for getting out of the hospital. I was out in seven days and my brother was out in 10 days."

Cindy and Don agree that more awareness, especially around organ donation and transplantation, is the key to making life easier for many kidney patients.

"We started talking about what we could do, and that's when it came to us - who better than the hockey community to come together and get Canadians fired up about organ donation," said Cindy.



Cindy Cherry
& her brother Tim

"I KNEW THE PEOPLE OF THE WESTERN HOCKEY LEAGUE WOULD COME THROUGH, AND THEY CAME THROUGH IN SPADES. \$265,500 IS THE MOST EVER RAISED FOR ORGAN DONATION AND WHEN YOU SEE SOMETHING LIKE THAT, IT MAKES YOU VERY PROUD TO BE A CANADIAN."

- DON CHERRY "

And so began the largest public awareness and fundraising campaign for organ donation in the history of The Kidney Foundation of Canada.

Now in its second year, "RE/MAX Presents: WHL Suits Up with Don Cherry to Promote Organ Donation," features a series of special hockey games across the WHL in Western Canada to promote the importance of organ donation and generate support for The Kidney Foundation. In its first year through the 2017-18 WHL regular season, hockey fans and the kidney community came together to raise more than \$265,500.

"We are grateful for this incredible partnership," said Joyce Van Deurzen of the The Kidney Foundation. "four thousand five hundred Canadians are waiting for a transplant, and each year 260 people will die waiting. Our goal is a transplant for everyone who needs one, and this partnership is a huge part of turning that goal into a reality."

"I knew the people of the Western Hockey League would come through, and they came through in spades," said Don Cherry. "We couldn't have done it without RE/MAX, our sponsor. \$265,500 is the most ever raised for organ donation and when you see something like that, it makes you very proud to be a Canadian."

From January through March 2019, all 17 WHL Clubs in Canadian markets will host their very own themed games, complete with a variety of special promotions for fans in attendance.

One thousand limited second edition Don Cherry bobbleheads will be distributed to fans.

Each hockey club will wear its own unique Don Cherry-themed uniforms on a designated game night. This year, the players' uniforms will be emblazoned with fun nicknames across their backs. Fans will have the opportunity to bid on the limited-edition jerseys, with 100 per cent of the proceeds going to local branches of The Kidney Foundation.

In addition to game-worn uniforms, fans will have the chance to bid on a Don Cherry-autographed jersey in each participating WHL market. Transplant recipients, donors, and people on the wait list will be dropping the puck at each game, sharing their personal stories with hockey fans.

"When I think of Tim and how desperate we were driving back and forth in Boston, we thought it was the end of the world, and our lives were over. The Lord was good," said Don Cherry. Always in the kidney patient's corner, Don said:

"Try not to despair, keep plugging along. Never give up - that's the name of the game."

