

of 30.

The Lawler native has become a fountain of knowledge on transplants, doing research on the subject.

“In 2016 there were 675 people waiting for an organ,” he said of a subject near and dear to his new heart. “And there were 50 donors. I am very, very fortunate. Iowa City is the only hospital in Iowa that does heart transplants and they only do 13 to 15 a year. But there’s a tragedy on the other side of this. Someone is losing a loved one.”

The national statistics are also disturbing as an average of 22 people die each day while waiting for an organ and every 10 minutes a new person is added to the waiting list. But one donor can save up to nine lives through organ donation and save and heal more than 100 lives through tissue donation.

Bergmann urges people to check the organ donor box on

their driver’s license. “That takes the responsibility away from family members. You can also register on the Iowa Donor Network and they take all ages. They do transplants on babies, it’s not uncommon.”

The Iowa Donor Network would also contact Bergmann if the family of the donor wanted to get to know him someday. “I’m all for that if they want to meet.”

Though the heart is functioning well, visits to Iowa City will continue. “I have to have biopsies of my heart to make sure my body isn’t rejecting it. It will never completely accept it. Eventually they will just be able to take a blood test to tell. But there’s a tremendous amount of science to provide a match. They even match antibodies.”

The medication he takes to avoid his body rejecting the heart also suppresses his immune system and thus he wears a mask in public places.

“I’m on 15 different meds now, from a few dollars to, well, one is \$100 a dose.”

There were complications after the heart surgery, but Bergmann did get out for good on Dec. 23. “I had most of my shopping done, but I bought the last present in the gift shop on the way out of the hospital, got home and wrapped presents until 11.”

Bergmann is using the same determination he did while winning the state wrestling title at 119 in 1972, but he doesn’t know if going back to work will ever be an option, given the immune-suppressing drugs.

“The support from the community has been overwhelming. People stop you and ask how you’re doing, I’ve had hundreds of responses on Facebook.”

Although Bergmann isn’t on Facebook personally, his sister Pam set up his benefit page.

Contributions to the Feb. 25 benefit may be made by contacting Verna Sabelka Orvis at 641-330-8778 or mailing them to her at Box 83, 308 E. Grove St., Lawler IA 52154. Her email is voahia@windstream.net. Donation items may be dropped off at American Heartland Insurance in Lawler (the old Bank Iowa building), or First Citizens Bank in New Hampton.

“We are looking for cash donations to purchase raffle prizes, as well as items that could be used for the auctions,” said Orvis, the benefit chairperson.

Bergmann’s sister Pam has started a Go Fund Me at <https://www.gofundme.com/s7-larry-bergmann-heart-transplant?r=98170>. “Or if you would like to send something directly to Larry you may at Larry Bergmann, Box 45, Lawler IA 52154 even if you can only send good wishes,” said Orvis.