

Local becomes ones of the longest-living liver transplant patients

Patti Funni celebrates 80th birthday nearly 38 years after having one of the first liver transplants at the University of Minnesota

Hannah Davis
News Editor

When Forest Lake resident and former longtime Scandia resident Patti Funni celebrated her 80th birthday Saturday, May 7, at the Scandia Community Center, it was a joyful occasion, one filled with lots of family and friends, music and dancing, and food.

It was a milestone worth marking, because nearly 38 years prior, Funni wasn't certain how long she'd make it, with her children in high school and a liver disease slowly killing her. On Nov. 7, 1984, she re-

ceived a liver transplant at the University of Minnesota, in the early years of the program. She has since become the longest-surviving adult liver transplant recipients, and her doctor surmises it's likely she is in the "top 20" in the nation.

Liver disease

When Funni was 31, a wife and young mother, she developed primary biliary cholangitis, a terminal liver disease, and was told she had maybe two years left to live.

"I remember, I went home and I cried, just cried. My youngest was still a baby sitting on the floor, and I'd rock him and think and say 'Why? I'm just a young mom living my life. How does this happen?'" Funni recalled.

But a conversation with her husband helped her face her situation.

"He said, 'Patti, you can't go on this way.' ... I had to come to grips with that, so we decided to live our lives fully for as many years as



Submitted photo

Patti Funni celebrates her 80th birthday alongside her grandson Nick Mahnke on Saturday, May 7 at the Scandia Community Center. Funni has become the longest-surviving liver transplant patient from the University of Minnesota.

we have," Funni said.

Her form of liver disease slowly destroys bile ducts in the liver, which aids in

digestion and helps the body absorb vitamins, and

Funni see page 2

With staff shortages projected, six sub positions approved

District intends to drop membership with Equity Alliance

Natalie Ryder
Community Editor

In an effort to mitigate staffing challenges at elementary schools in the district for the 2022-23 school year, the Forest Lake Area School Board approved six daily substitute teacher positions during its meeting on Thursday, May 5, in a 5-0 vote with Alex Keto and Kate Luthner abstaining.

"I think it's fair to say that due to the worker shortage and shortage with subs that we are going to have a challenge again next year," Superintendent Steve Massey said.

In October, the school board approved the addition of 11 substitute teachers to be stationed at elementary schools across the district, which principals said helped provide relief on days with high staff absence rates.

"They were used in some schools every day. I'm aware in Columbus Elementary there were seven days during the year that a sub wasn't needed," Massey said.

The 11 substitute teachers stationed at a particular elementary school were paid an increased rate at \$180 a day, versus the typical substitute teacher rate of \$135 per day as a way to entice substitutes to work for the district during a pandemic. This funding came from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, which the district

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