



**2,700**  
people in the U.S.  
are waiting for a heart

## Merle Zuel

(organ recipient)

Organ received: Heart

**His Story:** Merle Zuel was diagnosed with a defective aortic valve at the age of ten. Leading a rather normal life until age 34, Merle was admitted to the hospital with severe congestive heart failure in January 1996. After many years of treatment and medical interventions, Merle was evaluated for transplant in late 2005. It was determined then that an aortic valve replacement would be done. Surviving for another year, Merle grew stronger, but his heart continued to be a problem. Transplant was inevitable.

A heart transplant at Saint Luke's Hospital of Kansas City in February 2007 not only saved his life, but as luck would have it, it was through this process that he met his fiancée, a respiratory therapist.

He is grateful to be alive today and feels like he's on a mission to educate others about the value of organ donation, and to help other families dealing with loss. In fact, on the one year anniversary of his heart transplant, he and his fiancée spent the day at MTN's Annual Donor Family Memorial Service to support family members of donors.

"I feel like I owe it to others to help them through their loss," says Merle. "I was given a second chance at life and want to give back to those heroes who save lives".