

# Student gives the ultimate gift to professor

**W**hen Claremont Graduate University adjunct professor Jeremy Hunter needed a kidney transplant last winter, an unexpected donor rose to the occasion.

Laura Newman, a student at CGU's Peter F. Drucker and Masatoshi Ito Graduate School of Management, donated one of her kidneys to her former professor last December, saving his life in the process.

"In addition to it being the greatest gift she [Newman] could ever give me, she told me that she didn't expect anything in return," Mr. Hunter said. "This is an amazing story of generosity. I had to be open to receiving and that was a transformative moment. Having the outpouring of support I did, I can no longer discount my own significance."

Though Ms. Newman was the chosen donor for the kidney transplant, other CGU students had volunteered as potential candidates. But the kidneys of the other potential donors were not compatible for the procedure.

Ms. Newman said donating her left kidney was a "no-brainer" due to Mr. Hunter being someone she knew and respected. Yet the CGU student found it even easier to go through with the operation because of her unfamiliarity with the professor.

"It's funny because I think if he was a boyfriend, family member or a close friend, it would have been a harder decision to make," she said. "We're not close like family so I don't have any expectation of how he should live his life and I appreciate that he



Photo by Tom Zasadzinski

**Laura Newman, right, a student at CGU's Peter F. Drucker and Masatoshi Ito Graduate School of Management, donated one of her kidneys to her former professor, Jeremy Hunter, last December.**

doesn't feel the constant need to thank me."

Originally diagnosed with kidney disease in 1991 at 20 years of age, Mr. Hunter attempted to live

beyond the illness by implementing Zen meditation practices and pursuing his career goals as a professor. But in 2006, the CGU professor's condition

worsened and his doctor suggested a kidney transplant as a result.

"I tried an alternative for a year but I got worse," the 37-year-old professor explained. "At the end of 2007, I knew I had to begin the process. My first challenge was to be able to tell people about it because up to that point, I didn't talk about it. And then the next challenge was to ask for something. It was a psychological battle."

While approximately 25 potential donors came forward in 2008, Mr. Hunter received other support from the CGU community in the form of raising money to help pay for the professor's medical expenses. But Mr. Hunter's condition grew worse and by August, he underwent another form of treatment.

"I could feel myself fading out and I would have to force myself to keep going," he said. "I could no longer hide the fact that my kidneys were failing and in August, I had to go on dialysis. People who live on dialysis are heroic because of what it takes to get through each day."

Eventually taken off dialysis, Mr. Hunter and Ms. Newman then prepared for the operation in the months leading up to December. According to the Ms. Newman, her biggest concern was not losing her kidney but whether Mr. Hunter's body would be able to accept it.

"The greatest fear for me was that my kidney wouldn't take to him and he would reject it," the 38-year-old recalled. "I wasn't worried about not having a kidney because my family said if something went wrong and I needed another one, they would provide one for me."

The CGU professor referred to a book entitled, **Prepare for Surgery, Heal Faster**, as a guide for various relaxation and mind-focusing techniques to

ease his anxiety regarding the operation. Mr. Hunter said he was calmer going into surgery as a result of Peggy Huddleston's book.

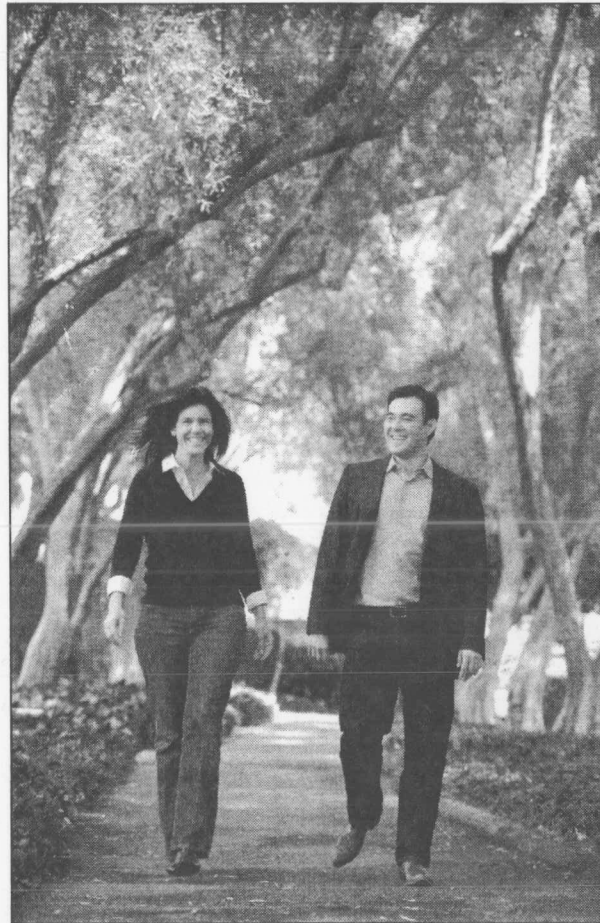


Photo by Tom Zasadzinski  
Laura Newman, left, and Jeremy Hunter have both fully recovered after their transplant operations last December.

"They give you a preliminary sedative and the last thing I remembered was looking at all the equipment and then having a mask placed on my face," he said. "My last thought was how could all this work? And then I was out. It wasn't like sleep. It was like a flip switch was turned off and a few hours later turned back on. When I woke up, I was relieved because it was done. It was finally done."

Both Mr. Hunter and Ms. Newman have enjoyed a successful recovery since the December 19 operation date. The CGU professor has seen his energy level significantly increase while the CGU student has continued to engage in an active lifestyle.

Ms. Newman is presently on a hiking trip at Mt. Whitney and has participated in marathons and backpacking trips this year.

"I've been great and I have had absolutely no problems," she said. "I had an easy recovery and feel like I did before. If more people were to donate their kidneys, it would help a lot of people who are currently on waiting lists and are dying."

With a new grasp on life, Mr. Hunter looks to help his students understand life as a significant yet temporary period of time. The whole ordeal has caused him to reflect on his own mortality.

"The last 7 months, I've been trying to figure out what I do now," Mr. Hunter said. "I'm getting used to not living with a cloud over my head. I think the larger picture is helping people understand that we have a limited time here on earth. Dying is not about 'if' but about 'when.'"

Mr. Hunter's surgery experiences are chronicled online at [www.carepages.com/carepages/JeremyHunterTransplant](http://www.carepages.com/carepages/JeremyHunterTransplant).

—Landus Rigsby