



Bright Light Foundation

John Lirette

2014 BLF Recipient



John Lirette was diagnosed with Congestive Heart Failure in 2010 and with a grim outcome expected, he faced adversity head on and made the changes necessary to live life. John was able to live with those changes for two years until his heart disease progressed. He was referred to Ochsner in New Orleans and was immediately put on the Heart Transplant list. And after a week stay he was sent home with an IV containing medications to make his heart work overdrive to hopefully buy him the time necessary to be able to receive his heart transplant. One week later he returned to Ochsner for a checkup and was noticed in the waiting room by one of the doctors. The doctor immediately sent him to have a procedure done to evaluate his heart. The news was bad he was told he

there aren't many options if he didn't get a transplant. That evening a balloon pump was inserted into his heart to keep it beating. This device could only be left in for a week without risk of infection. The only other option short of a heart transplant was to have an LVAD implanted and it would have to happen within a week. Like most people he didn't know exactly what that was but found out that it would be a device implanted in his chest that would do the work of his failing heart by pumping blood out of the left side of his heart to his other organs. This would be a bridge to transplant that would hopefully buy him the necessary time for a donor to become available. No heart had become available so the only option was the LVAD. The surgery for the LVAD was expected to be about 4-5 hours, but for John it ended up being four surgeries over a three day period due to complication including the right side of his heart also failing. As a last ditch effort the doctors implanted a temporary RVAD for the right side of his head, but could only leave it in temporarily and it had to be external since his body size wouldn't accommodate both devices. It worked and his heart with the help of the pump began to pump blood. He was in and out of consciousness for about three weeks, but began to recover. Doctors and the nursing staff were available at the hospital, but if he wanted to be able to leave the hospital, he and his wife had to learn to care for the new device and the power line that was now exiting his abdomen connected to battery packs. Six weeks after the surgery, they were released home, but life wouldn't be the same. The device required daily wound care as well as bi-weekly testing. John was able to live with this device for twenty-three months when he received the call for a transplant on February 21st 2014. The transplant has been successful so far and he is adjusting to living with the weakened immune system other restrictions. Overall, he is doing great and loving life. Through all of this John has always had a positive attitude and has been an inspiration to many through volunteer work, speaking to prospective LVAD and transplant patients as well as through his friendships and dedication to his family.