

November 22, 2009

Dear Braemar Friends and Neighbors,

As our Thanksgiving holiday is rapidly approaching, we find ourselves being more aware than ever of the things our family has to be thankful for. As you would expect, we are most thankful for the wonderful donor who has given our Bill his second chance at life, and our family the opportunity to remain "together." As we watch Bill grow stronger with each passing day, we can't help but wonder/mourn for his donor family. We wonder how they are doing, if they have a strong support group, if they are surrounded by concerned neighbors, and if they find peace in knowing the lives they saved in their gift of love, their gift of life.

As I wonder how our donor family is doing, I can't help but hope and pray that they are surrounded by the type of love and support that our family was and has been throughout this incredible journey of ours. I honestly find myself hoping, no praying, that they live in a neighborhood like Braemar. For if they do, I know they are not alone, I know that they are surrounded by love and support in their time of need. I like to think that they have friends surrounding them with encouragement and faith in remembering the spirit and life of their loved one – our hero. I genuinely hope that they feel the sense of community that we have felt each and every day since our world fell apart back in June.

Throughout our endless days in Northwestern Memorial, I would find myself constantly telling our nursing staff and doctors of our wonderful neighbors and community. I would tell them of the baked goods we would come home to, the fruit baskets that were sent to us, the cards that were dropped off at our door, and the meals that came from anonymous friends, and the wonderful friend that walked our dogs two times a day rain or shine for 70 consecutive days – God bless you Vicki Clement and family! The hospital staff was so accustomed to my stories of our neighbors, that it came of no surprise to them on the day of Bill's discharge, that I asked them to try and speed up the process, because there was a "little fanfare" being planned for Bill's homecoming. Little fanfare was probably not the best description to use for our Bill's homecoming celebration. A hero's welcome would be more descriptive and more appropriately describe the love that went into its preparation.

I wish I could adequately convey the depth of Bill's emotion when we pulled into our subdivision as we were greeted by his infamous pre-transplant pose highlighted by his theme of "swim." The balloons paving our way to our driveway only helped to build Bill's thankfulness of "I'm finally home." But nothing could have possibly prepared him for the banners, lights, and crowd of family, friends, neighbors, and well wishers. In fact, the only thing better about bringing Bill home, was the knowledge of where home is and what it is surrounded by...

So, on behalf of our Little Bill, husband Bill, Carissa, Gus and myself, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for not only the overwhelming homecoming celebration you put together for our Bill, but for all your months of support and your constant belief that we would someday bring our Bill home. Thank you all for all you have done and meant to our family throughout the most difficult time in our lives. Thank you all for making us so proud to say we live in Braemar and for further confirming that when we built this home 22 years ago, it was the best decision of our lives.

God bless you all and may you all be blessed with family, health, happiness, and togetherness this Thanksgiving and throughout the holiday season.

With love and appreciation,
Ann and Bill Coon
Carissa, Bill and Gus