

# Student hopes for a new life after surgery

By Renee Currington

*Campus Editor*

We often go through our daily lives without having to think very hard about the basic things of life.

Most of us probably eat when we're hungry and then rely on our bodies to take care of the complicated process of turning the food into energy. If we forget

to eat occasionally, we can make up for it later.

Whenever we need to go somewhere, most of us are able to simply get up and walk there.

Imagine worrying about not having enough energy to walk around campus, like how we worry about running out of gas while driving.

Those who suffer from dia-

betes must constantly be concerned about their blood sugar or glucose, which is the substance we derive from food that we need for energy.

According to the American Diabetes Association, Type I diabetes affects as many as 1 or 2 million in America.

With Type I diabetes, the pancreas fails to produce the insulin that allows body cells to use blood sugar for energy. The result is low energy levels and high blood sugar levels.

Cassy Bourget, a business senior, was diagnosed with Type I diabetes at the age of four. She can still recall that turbulent time when her parents took her to the doctor.

"I was so feisty, it took 4 male doctors to hold me down," said Bourget. "They came at me with needles and I was so scared."

Since that time, diabetes has become a part of her reality; it's something that she has to be conscious about every day of her life.

"First on my list of importance is my diabetes," said Bourget. "It pretty much controls everything I do."

Bourget's condition was even further complicated when she suffered a head injury when she was 11 years old. Because of the brain

injury, it is even more difficult for her to deal with diabetes.

"Because of my brain injury, I forget to take my shots and check my blood sugar," said Bourget.

Bourget follows a strict daily schedule that determines when she eats every meal or snack. Each day, she also must take two insulin shots and poke her fingers four times to check her blood sugar periodically.

"I've had my ups and downs," said Bourget. "When my blood sugar gets low I get really weak and I can't control what I'm doing."

Due to sudden bouts of fatigue during her daily activities, Bourget uses a motorized cart for assistance. When she is more active, she needs to eat more to sustain her energy level. Sugar lows can also be brought on by stress.

After 17 years of dealing with diabetes, Bourget finally has a chance to be cured.

She is on a waiting list for a new pancreas. According to the physicians at the Rochester Mayo Clinic, candidates for this type of transplant could wait from six months to a year.

However, Bourget may get one sooner because her blood type is AB, which means she can accept a pancreas from a donor of

any blood type.

While there is much for her to be hopeful about, in some ways, Bourget is as scared as she is happy. It isn't only the risks of the procedure that make her feel this way. It is the profound way the surgery will change her life.

"After I went to Rochester I cried a lot and was hysterical because diabetes is a part of me and a part of my life," said Bourget.

"If and when I get the transplant it will change my life so much in every aspect," said Bourget. "I won't be so dependent on my scooter, I won't have to worry about my shots and checking my sugar; I'll just be able to go and eat."

The transplant operation involves a one-week stay in the hospital and an additional 4-6 weeks for recovery.

For the first year after the surgery, she will still require a lot of medical attention until she finds out if her diabetes has been successfully cured.

"I've met a couple different girls who have had the surgery and they've done fine," said Bourget. "My relatives also know people who have had these kinds of transplants; they're very excited for me because they know how much trouble I've had."



Kyley Van Note/Stoutonia

Cassy Bourget, who has dealt with Type I diabetes for 17 years, is waiting for a new pancreas. Successful surgery could change her life.