

Forging a New Life After Transplant

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Keith Landry, a metal artist who works with chain mail and lives in the Houma, La., area, will celebrate the eighth anniversary of his liver transplant during the Labor Day holiday weekend. While Landry rejoices at his second chance at life, Tulane transplant surgeon Dr. Douglas Slakey says this kind of accomplishment is no longer remarkable.



Chain-mail artist Keith Landry will celebrate the eighth anniversary of his liver transplant during Labor Day weekend. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

"With liver transplants, there is close to 90 percent one-year survival and the five-year survival is 75 to 80 percent now," says [Slakey](#), who holds the Robert and Viola Lobrano Chair of the Tulane Department of Surgery. "We transplant livers for both adults and kids, and this is more the rule than the exception today."

Landry gets emotional when he remembers the phone call he received in 2003 with the news that he should get to the hospital quickly because a compatible liver was waiting for him. Hepatitis C virus had ravaged his liver, and Landry had become disabled with fatigue, a swollen body and swollen feet that made it difficult to walk. There was no doubt he would die without a liver transplant.

Since the successful transplant, Landry has seen his daughter “grow up to be the beautiful young lady she is today.” He is known as the “chainman” for his hobby: making jewelry and other accessories of chain mail.

“Everything is a pile of rings and two pairs of pliers to start,” says Landry, who sells his creations at festivals around the Gulf South.

Slakey, one of the two surgeons who performed Landry's transplant, says, “We have a great [transplant] team and each one of us takes the greatest reward from seeing the long-term successes and the impact that has on the patient and his family. We do transplants to get people back to living a normal life, doing things that the rest of us take for granted.”

Slakey adds that it is easy for people to become registered organ donors by going to the website for [Donate Life Louisiana](#).