

## The TIGER FUND Story

May 28, 2002



I had planned to write this letter after Justina was a successful liver transplant recipient. Recent events have forced my hand. She and I, as our ‘deal with God’, made a promise to each other to devote time, effort and professional energy to potential donors and transplant families --- after Justina’s surgery. Now — after enumerable blood transfusions, fights against infection, trips to emergency rooms, and days in intensive care units --- we, unfortunately, have lost our battle. Justina passed away May 26, 2002.

When the liver condition surfaced and even in the last few months, I thought that the wait for a transplant may be long, but it would happen. With driver license registration and other awareness programs, receiving an organ for transplant was inevitable. The first goal was “getting on the list”. Well, Justina was “on the list”. She was scored with the new [MELD system](#), which put her very high “on the list”. We were called for the operation six times (for various reasons, each a false alarm). Let me just say, Justina was a medical miracle for many months. At the end, we were still waiting for a liver.

Obviously, this isn’t the whole story, and I know all this comes as a shock to many who know us. Justina, was a very private person and didn’t want to impose her problems on anyone.

We were lucky in so many respects. We didn’t need a medical breakthrough --- transplants have an ever increasing success rate and Justina was very strong (other than her liver). We didn’t need money --- our insurance would cover the operation and we are blessed with other resources. We have a very loving support system of family and friends. We were treated by exceptionally, competent medical professionals, and we were at the top of the transplant list. I can’t imagine what families without these advantages are going through.

To follow through with our ‘promise’ (in Justina’s memory), I am developing the TIGER FUND (named after a stuffed tiger I gave Justina to help her fight) and asking for your help. I have registered the fund with the state of Florida, and I am preparing the proper non-profit paperwork. I am in contact with coordinators at the transplant center in Miami, who will help facilitate the effort.

Initially we need people to act as directors and help me with organization. We will allow the program to be as far reaching as funds and energy allow. The web site which will explain the purpose, goals and direction is [www.tigerfund.org](http://www.tigerfund.org). Please let me know, and thank you in advance.

Justina Gilbert’s loving husband for 26 years,

Dale Gilbert

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