

Oswego woman gets another chance at life, art

from page one

the crowd ahead of her, unaware what was happening behind her, people streamed past Tuminello as she simply stopped and stood there as the snow came down all around. She was, quite simply, unable to move.

"I couldn't walk any more and my heart was hurting. I couldn't breathe and it was freezing out," she remembered. "I thought I can't take another step, what am I going to do? What happens when I can't move myself anymore? That was the first time I got super scared. That's when I knew it was getting really bad. That was the same month I got the heart."

Her daughter realized her mother was not with her and came back. By then, she said, she had stood there long enough that she had recovered somewhat and was, with help, able to make it the last few feet into the building and out of the cold.

Once in surgery, when the heart has been evaluated and deemed good, the transplant is completed—what Tuminello calls the science part of the procedure—and then begins the art form of fine tuning and tweaking the different medications she will be taking the rest of her life so that her body doesn't reject the heart she's now made her own. It's a long and involved process for some such as her, and shorter for others.

She has had bumps in the road along the way, but, she said, "What I've learned going through this is that no matter how bad, there is always somebody else who is worse. That's why I was surprised when I got the call. I would see people in the hospital and I wasn't in the hospital, I was at home. There were people in the hospital waiting, people sicker than I was, and I didn't understand how could I jump all that, skip it, and go straight to the heart. But there are certain things they look for and maybe they didn't match it."

She doesn't know anything about her donor, if they were young or old, male or female, what race they were, or even the circumstances that led to the heart being made available to her. Transplant recipients are given the opportunity to send a thank you letter to the family, through the medical procurement team, something that took her a year to write.

"I didn't want it to just be some old letter," she said. "It took me a year for a few reasons and it was seven pages long. The day I wrote it I didn't plan to, but it just flowed out of me. I had been formulating things in my mind that I knew I wanted to include, but how do you begin to talk to what is most likely a grieving family and is a subject that can be very sensitive, that maybe they don't want to talk about. I took an approach of telling them about my situation and how their loved one has saved my life and enabled me to go on...how grateful I am and I thanked them profusely. I told them it was no small thing what their loved one did for me, and for other people. Something I struggle with—words aren't enough. How do you put it into words?"

While Tuminello hasn't received a letter in return, and after two years figures she probably won't, she says, "It's ok. I still pray for that person, for that family, and I still thank them. The best thing I can do is take care of this heart."

Tuminello is quick to share her "Extreme gratitude to God, my awesome doctors, nurses, care-

givers and staff, my loving and supporting family and friends and, most importantly, one kind stranger—and his or her family—who, through his or her last act of human love, gave me the gift of life." The list of what she is grateful for grows daily, from the mundane—showering without struggling to breathe—to life events such as graduation ceremonies, her daughter's wedding, and, so far, four more years than she might have had.

Creating art in burial urns

Sitting at her art table, paints, paper, scissors, newspapers—a multitude of items—at hand to create her artwork, Tuminello explained she has always loved arts and crafts. She took art classes in high school, and also at the Art Institute of Chicago, and now, she says, is another second chance.

The first one was for her life itself, but this one is a chance to use her time and talents "with what's going to feed my soul and what's going to be the most meaningful for me and other people. And to spread the beauty and love that I see in the world, and I see a lot of it, just through the miracles I've been through."

As she lives a life full of new possibilities, Tuminello said she still faces the question all humans confront at one time—she will die one day and what does she want? Does she want a formal casket and burial, or does she want cremation?

The trend, she realized, is heading toward cremation due to being "more eco-friendly, more economical, and a lot of people feel that they want their ashes scattered in a place that's meaningful to them. I am interested in the green burial movement—they take up less earth space than a regular casket, and there are all kinds of green burials."

The urns Tuminello creates, she says, are biodegradable scattering urns for cremation remains. "They are used for scattering ceremonies," she said, as well as for burial, although one is not large enough for all remains of an adult, but would be for a pet or a child.

The urns are suitable for burial and will completely decompose. They are made with all biodegradable, recycled materials, and all non-toxic paints, inks and glues so it will not harm the environment. Biobags are also provided so families can share the remains of their loved one if they wish.

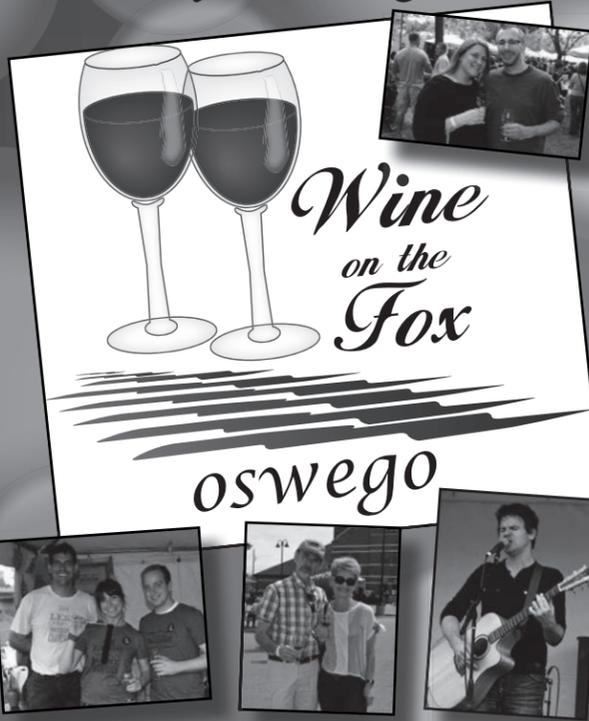
Her artwork on the urns is something she has been doing for only a few months now, and she has created five different designs, with more in her head. Each one of the designs is produced individually when ordered, and they will have slight differences due to the nature of the art. On one, named Calm Lake, she has melded a yellow sky with a serene blue lake surrounded by cattails and birds flying overhead. Another, entitled Cardinal Message, is made of recycled Ledger-Sentinel newsprint, fashioned into tree silhouettes that remind Tuminello of birch trees with cardinals around a heart that can be personalized.

She uses a freehand combination of watercolor and ink pens to create her art, varying from the more precise and realistic to the ethereal design called Silver Moonlight. "We get the most beautiful sunsets here in the Midwest, and the moon out the back window...I look out in that park and the moon is there for me, all the time,"



she said. "I am inspired by my experiences, the beauty in people and in nature, and it is my wish to share my love, life, faith, hope, joy and my miracle with people at their time of need, hoping to comfort them if even in some small way through my artwork and my story." To see her work, and view the work of other featured artists, visit www.artisurn.com. Tuminello's work can be found by clicking on the urns tab and then selecting scattering urns.

Join us for Oswego's Premier Wine Tasting Event



Wine Tasting,
Live Music &
Local Fare!

May 3rd & 4th

Located at Oswego
Village Hall
at the intersection of
Route 31 & Route 34

Saturday 11am to 8pm
& Sunday 12pm to 6pm

For more info call 630.554.3618
www.wineonthefox.com



630-554-9090

Oswego offers two quality
hotels for your convenience!

Special overnight packages available!



630-844-4700

**Bob's Septic &
Bob's Best Septic**

630-553-1919 • 815-786-3255
630-514-5661

★★ SPECIAL ★★

Get Your Septic Tank
Pumped by **July 31**
and

**WE WILL DONATE \$5
to "Kendall County
Salute to Veterans"**

Call today to schedule your
appointment and help support
our veterans who have and are
serving our country!

THANK YOU!