

After a Decade Spent Fighting for His Life, an HT Returns to INDOT

The return of Terry Lundy was a welcome sight for those in the Vincennes District who missed him terribly since the day his doctor ordered him to quit working at INDOT because of kidney disease.

That was way back in 2008, the start of a decade-long run in which Lundy would be fighting for his life. Eleven years later, Lundy's doctor finally declared him fit to work again. Lundy could have applied for any job, but because of the way that Human Resources representatives from INDOT and the State Personnel Department treated him during his absence, he knew that there was only one place for him: back at INDOT.

"The state took care of me and fulfilled all of my needs," said Lundy. "Human Resources helped me through the hurdles I needed to take, whether it was about disability, my health, or whatever. They not only were helpful when I called them, but they called me periodically to see how I was doing and how they could help. They did a Cadillac job and are a solid outfit with good people. They helped me work through problems before and after dialysis, and that's why I wanted to come back here."

Lundy started at INDOT in 1984 as a "maintenance worker 5," which is now called a "highway technician 3" — someone who works in the field on roads and bridges, and plows snow. He worked in the now-defunct Shoals Unit, part of the Paoli Subdistrict at the time.

Life was great, until he reached age 43 in 2006. That's when he was diagnosed with polycystic kidney disease, a disorder that affects the kidneys and other organs. Clusters of fluid-filled sacs, called cysts, develop in the kidneys and interfere with their ability to filter waste products from the blood. The growth of cysts causes the kidneys to become enlarged and can lead to kidney failure.

Lundy fought on, working for INDOT for two years despite having surgery to help combat the problem. But in 2008, he had to undergo dialysis, and his doctor ordered him not to work anymore.



Terry Lundy (second from left) is welcomed back to the Vincennes District by (from left) Gerald Hopkins, Phil Ivy and Jeff Berry.

The possibility of death became a reality. Lundy dug deep to fight the disease, using his INDOT experience as his ally.

"When you're young and go to high school, you learn things but you don't learn the quality facets of life," said Lundy. "I came to INDOT at age 21 and learned hard-working skills that guide you through life. Working for INDOT taught me how to live and survive, which would be huge considering what was to come."

Lundy's grit stood out, as did his attitude and meticulousness.

“While you’re on dialysis, you will never survive if you don’t have a good outlook and if you don’t do exactly what the doctors and dietitians say,” said Lundy. “I outlived eight other waves of people, young and old, who were also receiving dialysis during my years at the kidney doctor’s office. It was very sad.”

Lundy praised the state for allowing him to remain on insurance for years. Lundy also received disability, but — after 4½ years — that expired.

“The state was so good to me with insurance and the like, but I just ran out of time,” he said. “Once Social Security kicked in and disability ended, I had to resign in August 2015. It was nobody’s fault; it’s just what the circumstances were.”

In March 2016, a prayer was answered. A kidney match was identified.

“I received a kidney from a child, and the kidney grew into an adult-sized kidney,” said Lundy. “I wouldn’t be here if not for that child. I know it’s a grim way of looking at it, but I recommend everyone to be an organ donor. There is a real shortage out there.”

The road to recovery wasn’t complete. Doctors closely monitored Lundy for three years in the aftermath of the transplant. Finally, this summer, he was cleared to work. Lundy promptly applied online to be a highway technician at the Loogootee Unit in the Vincennes Subdistrict.

Longtime employees Jeff Berry, Gerald Hopkins, and Phil Ivy couldn’t believe it.

“When we were preparing interviews and we saw that Terry was on the candidate list, we were excited to see him and hear how well he was doing,” said Ivy. “When he showed up for the interview, it was amazing to sit and converse with him and hear his praises about INDOT and how the agency took care of him, and how excited he was to have an opportunity to come back to a job that he really loved.”

“Here is a man who was forced to leave and fight for his life. ... It was refreshing to see someone with such a positive attitude.” — Phil Ivy

Ivy continued: “We all take a lot for granted, and here is a man who was forced to leave and fight for his life, and now he has come back and is continuing this fight for his job. It was refreshing to see someone with such a positive attitude and positive opinion about our agency, and to hear of the caring Human Resources people who had helped him in this journey. We consider it an honor to help him continue this ride.”

On July 29, Lundy came full circle by resuming his career at INDOT. He works alongside Hopkins and reports directly to Berry, the Loogootee Unit’s foreman, who said, “It’s great having him back after all these years.”

Lundy’s favorite job is plowing snow, and he is training to regain his commercial driver’s license to make that a reality.

“I’m also excited to resume normal duties such as resurfacing roads,” said Lundy. “With our maintenance, we extend the life of the roads for several years.”

Lundy is an expert at extending life, both on the job and off it.