

# Daniel Sullivan

Written by:  
Judy Morrison

You've seen him. He's the tall, skinny guy who always seems to be at Pictona when you are. He's the one with the crooked smile and the ready joke. He's the one you can count on to be sporting a variety of zany, colorful knee-high socks that showcase his playful attitude. What you may not know, or see, is the fact that that guy has two lungs that aren't his. His name is Daniel Sullivan and the socks he wears are compression socks to ensure that his circulation delivers critical blood and oxygen to the lungs that saved his life.

Daniel's Mom immigrated to the United States from Spain when she was 20. She had Daniel when she was 21. Daniel was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis (CF) when he was 2. CF is a serious disease that causes severe damage to the lungs, digestive system and other organs in the body. It affects the cells that produce mucus, sweat and digestive juices. These secreted fluids are normally thin and slippery. But in people with CF, a defective gene causes the secretions to become sticky and thick. Instead of acting as lubricants, the secretions plug up tubes, ducts and passageways, especially in the lungs and pancreas. Doctors did not expect Daniel to live past 13.

While living with the knowledge that another year, month or day could not be guaranteed, Daniel's mother heeded doctors' advice to not "treat him like he's sick". They learned to ride bikes and roller skate together. She encouraged him to play flag football, volleyball and to just be a kid.

Medications, oxygen and taking preventative precautions were the norm, but Daniel beat the odds and didn't start developing serious complications until his 40's. Then, he started requiring oxygen at night. He did a lot of strength training to help clear his lungs. In 2016, at the age of 45, he "stopped being able to do much of anything". He went on oxygen 24/7.



In 2017, Daniel went to Mayo to undergo tests to determine his eligibility for lung transplants. He was denied because a colonoscopy showed a cancerous polyp, and he became ineligible for five years. Despite a follow-up colonoscopy that showed no cancer, doctors at University of Florida-Gainesville, and Moffitt in Tampa were reluctant to risk a surgery to remove part of his colon. After another referral, and another doctor, Daniel underwent the surgery and was declared eligible for a transplant and was put on a wait list in January of 2018. He went in for follow-ups every two weeks.

A donor was identified in March of 2018, and the rush was on. Lungs are only good for six hours, so a team was assembled and the expedited process began. Daniel went into surgery at 11:00 p.m. on March 11, 2018 and 12 hours later, the transplant was complete.

Because of his intubation, and four chest tubes, Daniel was in a lot of pain, but could breathe without struggling. He went into physical therapy, started running on his own, and attended support groups for people in various stages of the transplant process. He became an ambassador for the LifeQuest organ donation recovery organization and enjoys a life today that many thought he would never have.

Daniel joined Pictona in July of 2020. He quickly embraced pickleball and through hard work and dedication, became a challenging opponent and sought after partner. Although he will be returning to Spain to rejoin his family this November, hopefully, his story will live on and encourage all of us to be grateful for what we have and generous to those we can help.

Daniel's modesty about what he accomplished, and his appreciation for the generous donor to whom he owes his life, are on constant display. When he was asked what life is like today, Daniel immediately replied "every day is a gift". While the donor had no idea who would benefit from their decision to donate their organs, the truth is, we all have. For more information regarding how you can to donate your organs, please contact LifeQuest, an organ recovery donation organization at <https://lifequestfla.org/>.