

SECOND CHANCE

Brent Beaumont was given a second chance at life thanks to a kidney transplant.

And more than 15 years later the New Lynn resident is still making the most of every day.

He received the ranking of sixth dan black belt in the Japanese martial art of aikido last month. It is a feat only six other New Zealanders have achieved.

Mr Beaumont says he occasionally got into fights as a teenager. But that stopped after taking up aikido at age 19.

"I realised that there was a common denominator to the fights – and it was me. Aikido kept me physically fit and disciplined."

Mr Beaumont decided to spend his life giving back to the community after the transplant. He retrained as a primary school teacher, started the Waitakere Aikido club in Avondale and gave the family of his donor a bronze medal he earned in badminton at the World Transplant Games.

"I think they are happy knowing that a recipient is doing the most with their life and not being a ratbag," Mr Beaumont says.

He received a kidney transplant from a Glen Eden woman on April 19, 1995.

"In my late 20s I started to become really crook but didn't know why," he says.

"I found out both my kidneys had failed and was instantly put on dialysis but knew I couldn't stay on it forever."

He spent two years in daily treatment every six hours before getting the transplant.

"The moment I had the transplant I felt great. I now consider April 19 my second birthday."

Mr Beaumont also became one of the first recipients in New Zealand to meet the family of his donor. They wrote to each other and eventually agreed to meet a year after the transplant.

"I still keep in contact with them," he says. "But I quickly realised that while I was celebrating life they were mourning the loss of one."

The 51-year-old became a registered teacher last year at Kaurilands Primary School after 29 years as a medical researcher at Auckland University.

"I want to be a role model, not just teaching math and English, but also teaching them to be good."

He also travelled to Africa this year and is planning a journey to Antarctica in 2012.



Aikido 6th Degree black belt Brent Beaumont has made the most of life since receiving his kidney transplant more than 15 years ago.