

TRANSPLANT NEWS

COURTESY OF
TRANSPLANT SERVICES AT UPMC HARRISBURG

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NATIONAL KIDNEY REGISTRY VOUCHER PROGRAM

The National Kidney Registry (NKR) created a program to facilitate alternative transplant arrangements when a would-be donor-recipient pair turns out to be incompatible. This program also allows donors to donate at their convenience. Donors who choose the voucher program are covered by Donor Shield which provides living donor assistance such as lost wage reimbursement, travel and lodging expenses, and living kidney prioritization in the unlikely event you ever need a kidney. There are two types of programs available: a Standard Voucher and Family Voucher.

Why Donate Through the Voucher Program?

The Standard Voucher Program allows you to donate according to your schedule while providing a voucher to your recipient who is expected to need a kidney transplant within one year. The voucher can be redeemed when your recipient is ready for transplant. In this program, you can name up to five family members or friends as back-up in the event your intended recipient receives a deceased donor transplant or is no longer eligible for transplant.

The Family Voucher Program allows you to donate according to your schedule while providing a voucher for up to five family members or friends in case one of them ever needs a kidney transplant. In the event one of the people, you named as a voucher holder needs a kidney transplant, they will be prioritized for a living kidney

through the NKR. Only one family voucher can be redeemed and must be at an NKR participating facility.

Reasons to donate through the voucher program:

- You are not compatible with your intended recipient.
- You are compatible with your intended recipient, but you want a better match.
- You want to donate now but your intended recipient is not ready for transplant.
- You want to donate now so you can recover in time to assist a loved one after their transplant.
- You want to protect your family members or friends if they ever need a kidney transplant.

For more information, visit <https://www.kidneyregistry.org/for-donors/voucher-program/>.

POSTTRANSPLANT HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY TIPS

Wash Produce

Fruits and vegetables carry bacteria and germs. Washing produce will lower your chances of ingesting unwanted germs and infection.

Cook to Temperature

Cook meat to at least:

- **Poultry:** 165 F
- **Ground beef:** 155 F
- **Fish, pork, and whole cuts of beef:** 145 F

Refrigerate Quickly

Germs will grow on foods such as cut fruit, cooked rice, and leftovers. Do not leave foods at room temperature for more than two hours.

Balance Foods

Consume a variety of foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and reduced/low fat dairy products. Don't forget your water.

*Kate Minnich,
UPMC Nutrition Therapy*



Kidney donor climbs **MT. KILIMANJARO** to raise awareness about organ donation

By **Mandi Smith**

2020 was a rough year for everyone, and it made me ask, “God, why have you blessed me so much, and all these people around me are hurting?”

And then one day, He answered me — I noticed a public plea for someone desperately searching for a kidney donor. Living organ donation is something I never gave much thought to. I work in cardiology, and we perform heart transplants, so living donors aren’t a thing in my world. There are a lot of things I can’t do to help people with their illnesses or struggles — but this I could do. I am young, healthy, single with no children, and a long-time employee of a great organization with a lot of time off built up. I have amazing family and friends to support me.

I have a good friend who has worked in the transplant field for more than 20 years. At our girls’ breakfast, I asked her about the process of living donation. Feeling like it was almost definitely something I wanted to start pursuing, I was amazed to find out there was someone in my local community who needed a kidney. I didn’t know this person, but I quickly realized that I had to do this.

My process officially began with a phone call to the UPMC Harrisburg Transplant Center, giving this stranger’s name as someone I was hoping to help. After a few conversations with the transplant team, I decided it was time to tell my immediate family.

Then ...BOOM ...God... again.

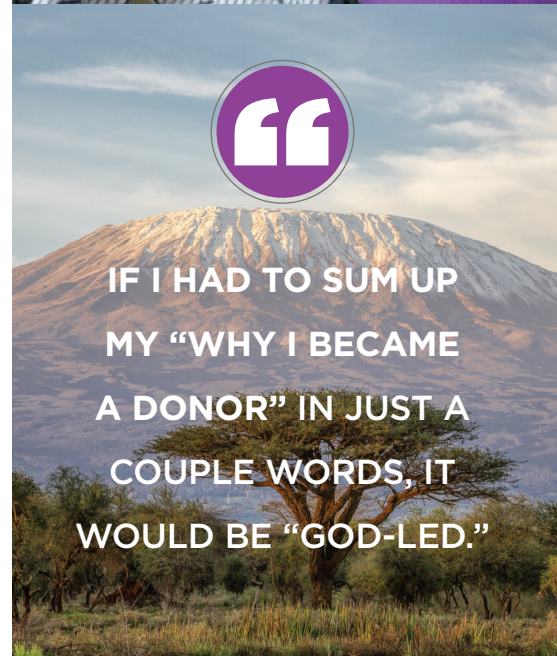
My brother immediately responded with, “Is it for [insert recipient’s name]?” I was shocked — apparently, this person was in my brother’s circle of friends, but not mine. My brother explained where I would’ve seen him or run into him before, but I’d never met him. I didn’t know him, and he didn’t know me.

On surgery day, I was at complete peace. I can honestly say that there was not one moment that day where I felt anything but peace and calm.

Three months later, I was able to meet my recipient. We have stayed in touch since, and I had the chance to attend his youngest son’s baseball game and meet him in person. We most recently celebrated our one-year “kidneyversary” over dinner and peanut butter pie.

A year later, I’ve become active in donor advocacy, and I’ve stretched my personal limits by traveling to Africa and climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro to stress the need for living organ donation — and to demonstrate what is possible after donation. Additionally, I have had the distinct honor and privilege to stay connected to my amazing inpatient floor nurse. I’d like to think that one year later I can now call her friend. She happens to instruct nursing students at the academic hospital where I work, and she has recently asked me to share my experience with some of her nursing students just a few short weeks after my return from Africa. Another opportunity to spread the word about living donation.

I feel like God put me on this journey for a reason(s). Some I may have already discovered, and others may be yet to come. God is good all the time.



DONATE LIFE MONTH ACTIVITIES



Make a Splash for Donate Life Month

For National Donate Life Month (NDLM) 2023, *Donate Life America* was inspired by the natural world of a pond coming to life in the spring. Frogs (and toads) are a sign of healing and renewal, and water lilies represent hope. The lily pads we see on the surface of a pond are part of a much larger plant rooted below the water. The water lily plant reminds us of the support and collaboration needed for hope to bloom.

This NDLM, we ask you to be a part of this interconnected life-sustaining community by registering as an organ, eye, and tissue donor; becoming educated about living donation; and championing the Donate Life cause.

For more information, visit UPMC.com/DonateLife.

FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 2023

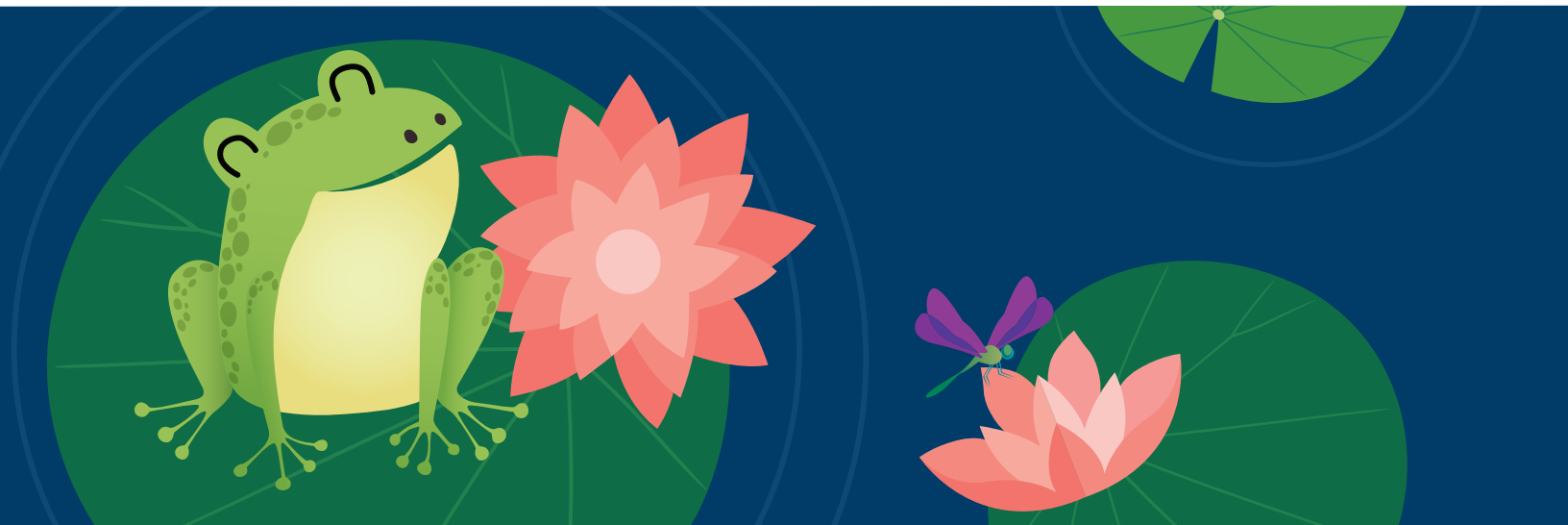
Flag Raising Ceremony at UPMC Harrisburg

A Donate Life Flag Raising Ceremony to honor organ donors will be held on Friday, April 7 at 11 a.m. at UPMC Harrisburg. Lou Baverso, UPMC in Central Pa. president, and Harold Yang, MD, PhD, transplant program director, will participate. They will join transplant team members, hospital staff, Gift of Life Donor Program representatives, and members of the community who have been impacted by organ donation. Donate Life flags will be raised at all UPMC campuses in the Central Pa. Region. These flags will fly throughout April to honor and remember those who provided the gift of life for others.

FRIDAY, APRIL 14, 2023

National Blue and Green Day

Show your colors for National Donate Life Blue and Green Day on Friday, April 14. Wear blue and green to help raise awareness of the need for organ donors. National Donate Life Blue and Green Day is held each year to encourage Americans to register as organ, eye, and tissue donors, and to honor those who have saved lives through their donations.



Join the UPMC Harrisburg Transplant Team for the 2023 Donor Dash



Each April, Gift of Life hosts the Donor Dash in celebration of the life-saving power of organ and tissue donation and to honor the donors who make it possible. Participants can select from a 10k run, a 5k run, or a 3k walk. The dash will start at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Date: Sunday, April 16

Registration Fee: \$35/person.

Includes round trip transportation to Philadelphia and a free UPMC T-shirt.*

Schedule:

Leave Harrisburg	Approximately 4:30 a.m.
Registration opens	6 a.m.
10K Run	7:10 a.m.
5K Run	7:20 a.m.
Kids Fun Run	7:45 a.m.
3K Walk	8:30 a.m.
Return to Harrisburg	Approximately 4 p.m.

To register for our team, visit classy.org/team/479857. Click the link to register and select "UPMC Harrisburg Transplant."

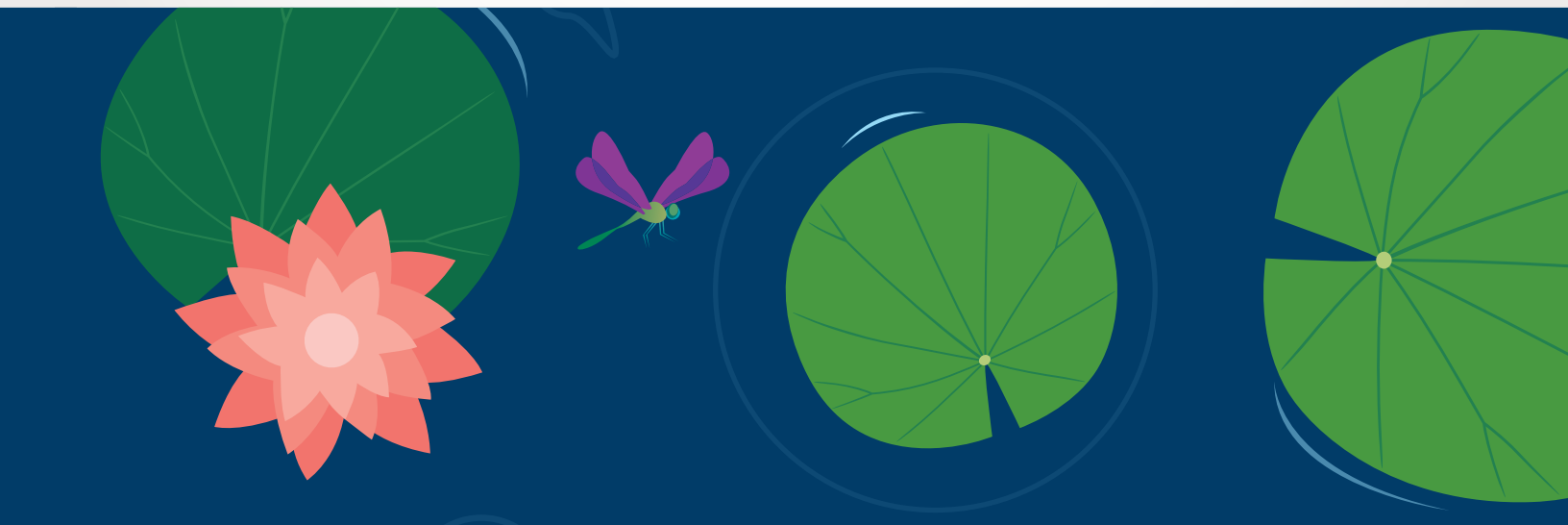
Registration deadline is April 1.

For updates, please check the website above.

**UPMC T-shirts will be available to the first 100 registrants.*



UPMC
LIFE CHANGING MEDICINE





Karina's Story: Donating a Kidney to Save a Life

KARINA POSEY — A WIFE, FOSTER MOM, MOTHER OF FOUR, and a hair salon owner in Mount Union, Pa. — has a very full and busy life. But, she says, being accepted as a living-kidney donor at UPMC Harrisburg was one of her best moments.

"I was around 13 when I told my mom to make sure my organs got donated if anything were to happen to me," she recalls. When she turned 16, Karina registered as an organ donor. "I made sure it was on my driver's license. I was passionate about being a donor."

A Facebook post from an acquaintance who needed a new kidney launched Karina on the journey to become a living donor. "He was someone in need, and I wanted to be the person to step up and help," she explains. Immediately after reading the post, Karina called UPMC Harrisburg Transplant Services. She was assigned to a transplant nurse and began the process to learn if she was a suitable donor — and a match for the person in need.

The donor evaluation process can take up to six months to complete. Because she had a pre-existing heart condition, it took longer for doctors to clear Karina for surgery. She never had concerns about going through with the procedure, though. "The doctors were very cautious," she says. "They wanted to be sure they were making the best decisions for me."

While Karina was found to be a viable donor, she and the recipient weren't a match. Instead of canceling the procedure, the UPMC Harrisburg transplant team suggested a paired exchange. "This program is fantastic," says Karina. "In our case, two people were able to get new kidneys." In a paired exchange, each donor gives a kidney to the recipient in the other pair. The UPMC Harrisburg transplant team searched nationwide for a matching donor/recipient pair.

Three weeks later — on Oct. 21, 2020, Karina underwent a successful surgery at UPMC Harrisburg. Karina's kidney went to someone in Georgia and the recipient's kidney came from a donor in Georgia. "In our case, two people got new kidneys instead of just one. Two people got the opportunity to thrive, and that made it even better." Karina was discharged from the hospital three days later.

"The whole experience was incredible," says Karina. "The staff at UPMC Harrisburg are phenomenal. They supported me in every possible way to make it easy for me."

She was particularly impressed with the transplant surgeons. "They explained everything in layman's terms so I had no questions whatsoever," she says. "That was very reassuring."

While kidney donors who work in an office setting typically go back to work two to three weeks after surgery, it was six weeks before Karina went back to her salon. "I'm on my feet with my hands in the air for 10 hours a day, and that tugs at the core muscles," she says. "I didn't want to overdo it, so I listened to the doctors. But it felt like no time at all before I was back to a full workday."

For Karina, the donor experience is a humbling one. For most people on the national transplant waiting list, it can take from three to six years to get a kidney, she says.

"I can live a full, healthy life with just one kidney," she says. "Donating one of mine may give someone else the opportunity to live a fulfilling life. I hope that talking about it might encourage and inspire someone else to step up and donate."



My Kidney Donation Journey

By Steve Cosey

ON OCTOBER 18, 2022, I DONATED A KIDNEY TO DAVE SHAFER. I have been blessed by having the opportunity to obey God through loving a neighbor in this way. I know God was leading me through the journey.

My career as a respiratory therapist at UPMC Carlisle has made me aware of the need for kidney donors. I have seen the effects of kidney failure on many of my patients. I have been involved in the transplant process when I cared for patients who became organ donors upon their death. I was also aware of the possibility of being a living-kidney donor and felt it was something I should do, but never pursued it.

Dave and I have been acquainted for a number of years through our first responder activities. I am a volunteer firefighter with Monaghan Township Volunteer Fire Company and Dave is a volunteer with Upper Allen Fire Department. Occasionally, I would see Dave at emergency scenes but never had a personal or social connection. In 2022 our relationship would change.

After not seeing each other for several years, Dave and I worked together briefly at an auto accident in March. A few days later my co-worker talked to me about him. Her husband volunteers with Dave at Upper Allen. She told me that he needed a kidney and that she could not donate because she is too small. It did not occur to me at that time that I should consider donating.

In April, Dave and I worked together briefly at another accident. I thought about his need for a kidney but didn't discuss it with him. A few days later, on April 24, I reached the turning point in my journey. A local newspaper published a collection of articles about organ donation, including one that told Dave's story. It told of his search for a living donor and his wait for a deceased donor. Dave had two factors that limited the number of possible donors. The donor had to have type O blood and had to be a large person. I immediately realized that I met both of those requirements. When I thought of the experiences that

preceded this decision, I realized that God had been leading me to this point.

Confirmation that this was God's plan came when I told my daughter, Alicia, about my decision. She told me that a few days earlier her family had ham steak for dinner. Her boys asked about the bone in the ham. She explained that the center of the bone contained bone marrow and that some people needed to receive bone marrow from a donor to treat an illness. They went on to discuss organ transplants. After she explained how people can donate a kidney because they have two, they concluded that those who were able to should donate. I was touched to have my grandsons share this confirmation from God.

After going through numerous tests, I was told on August 4 that I was accepted as a donor, and they were ready to schedule surgery. I had the privilege of calling Dave and surprising him with the news. He would be getting a kidney and I was the donor.

The day of surgery was great. We got to visit with Dave before I went to surgery. After my surgery, our wives Della and Kathie met coming off the elevator, and were able to spend time together during Dave's surgery. Later that afternoon we were told that Dave's surgery went well, and the kidney was working well. The next morning Dave was moved to a room near mine and we were able to visit with him and Kathie. Everything went well for both of us.

God's love became more real to me when I saw how he worked to bless Dave, Kathie, and me. I am left with peace and satisfaction knowing that I have completed the good work that he prepared for me to do.

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