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Kidney Recipient

“How My Life was Transformed by Transplantation”

On November 18, 2008, my precious son died and on the next day, I received his left kidney. I have been told that this was the first occurrence at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where a patient received a kidney from a deceased child.

It is amazing that in life, he could not donate a kidney to me, but after his death it was possible.

Prior to my transplant, I tried peritoneal dialysis because of the flexibility so that I could continue to practice law. Because of a hole in my diaphragm, the dialysis fluid would not remain in the abdominal area and it was discontinued. Then I began nocturnal hemodialysis – eight hour treatments, three times a week.

Sometimes I was emaciated, had congestive heart failure and hypertension. Type 2 diabetes exacerbated the renal disease. But, I was able to have three lovely children and receive two graduate degrees in social work and law, before end stage renal disease changed by life. Eventually, I was forced to stop working and qualified for social security disability.

I vowed that if I were fortunate enough to receive a kidney transplant that I would become an avid volunteer working to increase organ, tissue and bone donations and be an advocate for people receiving dialysis. Until you have a personal or visual experience with people who are on dialysis, it is difficult to comprehend the issues.

Now, I travel, garden and care for my grandchildren, and I want to work part-time. I tell my story at events to educate, honor and increase donations. I received my first standing ovation after telling my story in church where I was invited to talk. At the National Donor Recognition Ceremony, I met people, shared my story and learned more in two days at workshops and sessions than I have learned in eight months.

Many people have told me that they have learned a lot about transplantation because of our story, Ryan and me. Our story generated publicity about organ, tissue and bone transplantation. My pastor said that he decided to become an organ donor and changed his driver's license because of me.

My family and I are committed to working to educate, inform and discuss our story so that many others can be helped. Each time that I attend an event, I heal a little more by connecting with other donor/recipient families. Hearing their stories and sharing information in seminars and sessions helps us heal, learn and educate.

Therefore, it would be an honor to be selected to participate in the Astellas Ride of a Lifetime 2010 contest and participate in the Rose Parade. I would be able to meet people from all over the nation and get input and suggestions about a program I am developing that would enable donor families and donor recipients to have access to free legal consultation.