



A SECOND CHANCE

My heart was broken. No amount of love or resolve could fix it. There was no guarantee I would qualify for the transplant list and no guarantee a heart would become available in time.

My wife and I began living a different life. All day-to-day duties fell on her as I continued to decline. Occasionally, my heart would begin to beat erratically and I would lose consciousness. My implanted defibrillator would shock me back to life. There was a constant worry that one day the defibrillator might fail. My health had deteriorated to the point where my life expectancy was now being measured in weeks.

“Another family, while suffering a devastating loss, had the compassion and understanding to make something good happen out of their tragedy. I am profoundly aware of their loss and I will always share their sorrow as I celebrate the blessings of my life.”

— Kieth, heart transplant recipient in 2005,
pictured above with his wife, Cid.

Then the call came. “We have a heart for you”.

My surgery lasted six hours, a long time for my family but just a blink of an eye for me. Five hours after surgery I was awake in the ICU. My sister said I reminded her of her flowers. When she left for work she would water them, but the long hot day would deplete and wilt them before she returned home. She would water them again and could actually see them plump up and become fresh and colorful. I went into surgery pale and weak and came out all rosy, pink and full of life.

I waited five months before receiving my new heart. During that time I met many doctors, nurses, technicians, counselors and my very own transplant coordinator; my coordinator for “life” as I refer to her. I don’t remember the names of all the people involved but I will always remember their faces, kindness and the skills they maintain in this miracle program. The experiences and the care I received will always be a part of my life and it drives my empathy towards all those patients and families in similar circumstances. The world is a better place as a direct result of the dedicated professionals and the donor families that enable transplant programs to exist.

If you choose to become a donor:

- Answer “yes” to the organ donor question on your driver’s license renewal application.
- Sign your license or ID card.
- **Tell your family** about your decision, to help ensure your wishes are honored.

For more information on organ donation, visit uwhcopo.org.



UWHealth

University of Wisconsin
Organ Procurement Organization
uwhcopo.org