

Life Stories *Life Stories*
Life Stories



Life Stories

Health Alliance transplant recipients
share their extraordinary experiences



**The Christ Hospital • The University Hospital
The St. Luke Hospitals • The Jewish Hospital
The Fort Hamilton Hospital
Alliance Primary Care**

1-888-640-CARE
www.health-alliance.com/transplant
©copyright 2/01



Transplant Services



Life Stories

Life Stories

The Health Alliance provides a comprehensive solid organ adult transplant program that comprises kidney transplantation at The Christ Hospital and liver, kidney, simultaneous kidney/pancreas, pancreas, islet cell and heart transplantation at The University Hospital. This program has a 33-year history of success in transplantation with some of its patients holding world records for survival. Because of its long history, this academic program has physicians who are involved in research and have years of experience, resulting in advanced treatments for transplant that benefit patients.

Kidney-Pancreas Transplantation

A Christmas Gift To Remember

December 8 will forever be a special day for Jeffrey Dunn. It was on this day in 1997 that Jeffrey received the best Christmas gift of all—the gift of life.

After suffering from diabetes for 17 years, Jeffrey's kidneys had sustained serious damage. After being on dialysis for a year, Jeffrey was placed on the waiting list to receive a simultaneous kidney/pancreas transplant.

On the night of Dec. 7, 1997, Jeffrey, minister of music at Christ Temple Apostolic Church in Louisville, Ky., prayed that the organs would soon become available. "At that point, I was truly ready to receive the transplant."

The next morning, Jeffrey received a phone call from a nurse who told him that a kidney and pancreas were available. "I was jumping up and down inside," says Jeffrey. "My wife and I were so excited. It felt like we had won the lottery!"

The transplant was performed the same day at The University Hospital. Jeffrey had no problems with rejection, and he went home from the hospital on Christmas Day. "I am so thankful to the Lord, who gave me the faith and trust that helped me through my surgery, and all the doctors and nurses who cared so diligently for me. They were true professionals who worked with dedication and expertise. My wife and I are also very thankful for our parents, Bishop Johnnie L. Johnson, First Lady Claire Johnson and the Bethlehem Temple Church family, who gave us their prayers, support and encouragement during my illness and surgery."

Today, as a musician, Jeffrey spends his time singing and playing instruments at his church. He also enjoys playing ball and riding roller coasters at the amusement parks.

"Being a transplant recipient has made me look at the world in a whole new light," says Jeffrey. "I am so thankful for the things I have, and I could never take anything or anyone for granted."

The University Hospital
Pancreas Transplant
Program began
in 1979. For
more information
about pancreas
transplantation,
call 513-584-3581.



Heart Transplantation

Beating the Odds Again and Again

Debbie Tunnacliffe's life is an inspiration of courage and survival, and her story gives new meaning to the word "survivor." It was Valentine's Day in 1996 when Debbie, eight months pregnant with her second child, found a cancerous lump in her breast. Three days later, she gave birth to her son, Matt.

Debbie returned to the hospital for a lumpectomy. Afterwards, she received eight rounds of chemotherapy and several radiation treatments, which lasted until November of 1996. Debbie had beaten the odds.

Although Debbie had beaten the odds against breast cancer, she had another serious problem. Two days after the birth of her son, Debbie found that she was having difficulty breathing, and her heartbeat was fast and irregular. An enlarged heart from a condition known as peripartum cardiomyopathy left Debbie with only 20 percent function of a normal heart.

At age 34, Debbie once again beat the odds with a heart transplant. On Jan. 30, 1998, she received a call from her transplant surgeon, who told her that a compatible heart was available. "I was very calm when I received the call," says Debbie. "I knew that I needed the transplant, and I trusted the doctors completely."

The transplant was performed at The University Hospital on the same day. After the surgery, Debbie remained in the hospital for six weeks, where she recovered from rejection and two strokes. Beating the odds again, Debbie survived.

As a young woman and mother of two, Debbie survived obstacles most people cannot imagine. "I was able to stay motivated and keep a positive outlook because I wanted my two sons, Matt and Sam, to know their mother," says Debbie. "Knowing that they are happy and healthy and wanting to be here to share in their lives has been my reason for surviving."

Despite all the challenges she faced, Debbie succeeded. In March of 1999, Debbie returned to work full time as a human resource manager—another victory!

Since then, Debbie has retired from working to spend more time with her husband, Chuck, and her kids. She has also devoted more time to volunteering/speaking about the issues of transplantation and organ donation, especially to middle and high school age kids. Debbie is also on a taskforce that meets with transplant coordinators when they talk about patient concerns. Debbie helps out at her children's schools and is very involved with her church as she is a sponsor for people who want to become Catholic. Today, she is physically active and does many of the things she loves the most—exercising, swimming, dancing, yoga and going to the gym three times a week. She speaks at her church once a year and has participated in several community functions related to organ donation.

"I'm still the same person I was before the transplant," says Debbie. "But I no longer feel like the clock is ticking away or that my time here is limited. The whole experience has made me see how precious life really is."

The University Hospital has been performing heart transplants since December 1985. Thanks to our highly skilled team, the one-year transplant survival rate exceeds 90 percent. For more information on heart transplantation, call 513-584-7217.



Kidney Transplantation

A Five-Time Champion

Since Oct. 17, 1987, Art Hull has experienced several important victories. Among them, he competed in 5K races and tennis matches at the Transplant Games in 1990, 1992, 1994 and 1998. These triumphs would not have been possible without Art's biggest success of all—the kidney transplant that saved his life.

For 24 years, Art lived with a kidney disorder that was diagnosed during a routine physical exam. The doctor told Art that he could delay the onset of end stage renal failure if he quit smoking and lost weight. Art quit smoking, embraced a healthier diet and engaged in a regular physical fitness routine. However, the kidney disorder did not go away. Twenty-two years later, Art went into end stage renal failure and was put on dialysis for the next two years.

Shortly after Art was placed on a waiting list to receive a kidney, he received a call from his doctor, who told him that a kidney was available from a cadaveric donor. "My wife and I were getting ready to go to the symphony when I received the call," recalls Art. "Although I was anxious and tense, I was also filled with jubilation. I told the doctor, 'Just tell me where to go.'"

On Oct. 17, 1987, at age 60, Art immediately went to The University Hospital. Despite a few difficulties with rejection, Art says his recovery from the transplant was "nearly perfect." Just four weeks after the surgery, Art returned to work full-time at Cincinnati Gas & Electric (CG&E). He also ran nine miles in the American Heart Association's Heart Mini-Marathon four months after his transplant.

Today, Art works full time for the Cincinnati Board of Education and also serves as president of the World Affairs Council of Greater Cincinnati. "My life after the kidney transplant has been wonderful," says Art. "I have so much energy now, and I am doing what I want to do, which is to give back to the community."

When Art is not working, he enjoys playing tennis, reading, listening to opera and spending time with his four daughters and one granddaughter.

"The transplant was such a blessing for me and my family," says Art. "It really made me feel whole again, and it gave additional meaning to all the people and things that are so important in my life."

The Kidney Transplant Program began at The University Hospital in December of 1967. Call 513-584-4956 for more information.



Liver Transplantation

Living Life to the Fullest

Byron Clark and his wife, Charlene, recently celebrated an important event—the two-year anniversary of Byron’s liver transplant.

Byron was just 44 years old when doctors found a cancerous tumor in his liver. The doctors removed the tumor on April 30, 1998. However, Byron was told he would also need a liver transplant in order to survive.

After being on the waiting list two months, a compatible donor liver became available. “At that time, I was already in the hospital,” says Byron. “Because I was very sick, I don’t remember hearing the good news, but my wife said she was ecstatic.”

Byron received the liver transplant that same day, May 11, 1998, at The University Hospital. He returned home after only a couple of weeks. “I was very fortunate to not have any problems with rejection or other complications after the surgery,” says Byron.

In just a few months, Byron was up and around again. “I am very thankful to my church family, who set up a prayer network for me while I was sick and while I was recovering from the surgery,” says Byron. “I am especially thankful to the donor family who made it all possible.”

Today, Byron enjoys bowling regularly, riding bikes and camping. He says that the transplant has positively affected him, not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually as well. “The transplant has given me a different outlook on life,” says Byron. “I don’t take things for granted anymore, and I always make sure I tell my family and friends how important they are to me. Right now I am enjoying life and living it to the fullest.”

The University Hospital Liver Transplant Program began in 1986, and as of 2001, more than 360 liver transplants have been performed. For more information on liver transplantation, call 513-584-9999.



Living Donor Kidney Transplantation

A Basketball Legend's Greatest "Assist"

As a 12-time NBA All-Star, Oscar Robertson is revered as one of the greatest basketball players in history. During his 14-year NBA career with the Cincinnati Royals and Milwaukee Bucks, Oscar scored 26,710 points, made 9,887 assists and landed 7,804 rebounds. In addition, Oscar is the only player in history to average a triple-double, or double figures in points, assists and rebounds (1961-1962). However, Oscar's greatest "assist" occurred in 1997, when he helped save his daughter's life by donating one of his kidneys.

For seven years, Tia Robertson suffered from Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, a rare disease that causes the immune system to attack the body's tissues. The disease caused her kidneys to fail, and after several months of dialysis, doctors told Tia that she needed a kidney transplant. Tia's two sisters, her mother and her father, Oscar, offered to donate a kidney. After each were tested, Oscar and Tia's sister, Shana, were found to be compatible donors. "I wanted to be the kidney donor for Tia," says Oscar. "Since I am her father, I felt it was my responsibility to help her return to a normal, healthy life."

The double surgery was performed at The University Hospital on April 10, 1997. Oscar says he was not frightened about undergoing the surgery. "I never worried about myself going through the surgery," says Oscar. "The doctors explained everything to me very clearly, and I felt very confident in them. I just wanted my daughter to feel better again."

Both surgeries were very successful, and Tia did not have any problems with rejection. Oscar remained in the hospital for about four days, and Tia was released about six days after the surgery. Today, Tia works at ORPACK-Stone, a corrugated container company Oscar formed in 1989. Oscar also continues to participate in a variety of charity events throughout the country.

"The whole experience has made me think about all the people who are on dialysis and the importance of organ donation," says Oscar. "We are often concerned about trivial things. All of us should consider organ donation and the importance of saving lives."

The Kidney Transplant Program began at The University Hospital with a living-related kidney transplant in December of 1967. Call 513-584-4956 for more information.



Kidney Transplantation

Surviving a Genetic Kidney Disease

Peggy Burwinkel was not surprised when doctors diagnosed her with polycystic kidney disease at the age of 22. That's because Peggy's mother and aunt both died from the genetic disease that causes fluid-filled cysts to grow in the kidneys. The cysts can slowly replace much of the mass of the kidneys, reducing kidney function and leading to kidney failure.

Initially, Peggy was able to control the disease by exercising, maintaining a healthy diet and controlling her blood pressure. However, after suffering from the disease for nearly 20 years, Peggy's kidneys had sustained serious damage. Doctors removed her polycystic kidneys, and Peggy was put on dialysis for four months.

After being on the waiting list to receive a kidney for only 11 days, Peggy, age 41, was told that a compatible kidney had been found from a cadaveric donor. "I never expected to receive the call so soon after being placed on the waiting list," recalls Peggy. "Everything was happening so quickly. I received the call at 5:30 a.m., and by 11 a.m. I was already at the hospital. It was terrifying and exciting at the same time."

Peggy's kidney transplant was performed at The Christ Hospital on Aug. 27, 1996. Following the surgery, Peggy remained in the hospital for several weeks, where she recovered from rejection and a serious virus.

"I never could have made it through my illness and surgery without the tremendous love, support and encouragement from my husband, Larry," says Peggy. "I am also very thankful to my doctors, nurses and all the hospital staff members who cared for me during my ordeal."

Peggy returned to work part-time as a nuclear medicine technologist at The University Hospital in June 1997. By December of the same year, she was working full time. Today, Peggy enjoys crafts, reading, yoga, gardening and traveling. She also serves as the local coordinator for the Polycystic Kidney Disease Foundation.

"Being a transplant recipient is truly an amazing gift," says Peggy. "It makes you appreciate life and the people around you so much more. I am eternally grateful to my donor family. I pray for them every day, and I thank God that I have been lucky enough to receive such a wonderful gift."

The first cadaveric kidney transplant at The Christ Hospital was performed in January of 1972. To contact The Christ Hospital Kidney Transplant Program, call 513-585-2493.



Living Donor Kidney Transplantation

The Gift of Love

Jill Brock has been surviving with just one kidney since birth. Although she was born with two kidneys, one was completely non-functional. Jill lived a normal life until she began experiencing kidney problems, severe itching and fatigue at the age of 23. Upon a visit to her doctor, Jill discovered she needed to be admitted to the hospital for dialysis. After six months of traveling to and from the hospital for dialysis, Jill, a kindergarten teacher, underwent a kidney transplant after school let out in June. The kidney she received, however, was not from an anonymous donor, but from her 27 year-old sister, Kay.

With her sister's kidney, Jill was able to enjoy life without dialysis for 19 years. However, her body gradually rejected the kidney transplant until 1997. Jill did not look forward to the long regimen of dialysis ahead of her, and with the advice from her doctor, she decided to undergo another kidney transplant. Because her sister had already donated one kidney, this transplant came from her younger brother, Bill, age 38.

Jill recovered quickly from the transplant, which was performed at The Christ Hospital in 1998. Despite her quick recovery, however, she remained at home after the surgery because her job as a kindergarten teacher exposed her to many illnesses her weakened immune system could not yet handle. Seven weeks after the transplant, Jill returned to the job she loved and gradually eased into some of her favorite pre-transplant activities.

After two kidney transplants, Jill Brock continues to lead a full and happy life. Still a full-time kindergarten teacher in Taylor Mill, Ky., Jill remains active and loves to scuba dive, take aerobics classes and participate in arts and crafts. She doesn't take anything for granted. "I value everything so much now," says Jill. "I cannot thank my husband, Rick, enough for his constant love, support and compassion." As for her brother and sister, Jill says, "I can never repay them for the gifts they have given to me. They have truly given the gift of love."

The Christ Hospital performed its first living-related kidney transplant in January of 1972. To learn more about The Christ Hospital Kidney Transplant Program, call 513-585-2493.



Laparoscopic Living Donor Kidney Transplantation

Family Ties

For nearly 20 years, Calvin Shaw had to battle for his health. In the spring of 2000, Calvin overcame the battle when his son gave him the chance to once again live life as a healthy man.

Calvin, along with his two brothers and sister, suffered from high blood pressure. In 1993, after more than ten years of battling the disease, Calvin was forced to have one of his damaged kidneys removed. A few years later Calvin began dialysis, because his remaining kidney could no longer function on its own.

Calvin recalls, "Dialysis was hard. For three days a week, I sat in a dialysis clinic for three and a half hours. I was worn out, with little energy, and I knew that I couldn't do this for the rest of my life."

Calvin was right. A year after starting dialysis, doctors told Calvin his health was diminishing. He would need a kidney transplant, and the sooner the better.

With his name on the list for a kidney, all Calvin could do was wait. After a year on the waiting list, Calvin's doctors again reviewed the options with him. They suggested that he ask a relative to donate a kidney. As Calvin and his family soon learned, a living donor would mean many benefits including eliminating any more time on the waiting list and decreasing the chance for rejection.

After discussions with both his family and doctors, Calvin's son Taswell decided he wanted to donate one of his own kidneys to his ailing father. One of Calvin's four children, Taswell was only 31-years-old at the time.

"I was worried about him," Calvin states. "He was a healthy young man. The thought of receiving a kidney from Taswell was bittersweet. It was exciting, but at the same time I was very concerned about my son."

Doctors and staff members reassured both Calvin and Taswell that after donation, a healthy person can lead a normal life with only one kidney. The decision was made. Taswell would be his father's kidney donor.

On March 23, 2000, Calvin Shaw received a kidney from his son at The University Hospital. Although he was sore, he was up and walking around, already feeling more energy than he had before the operation.

As for Taswell, only three days after the transplant, he returned home to his wife, Janice, and their four children. In a week, Taswell was back on his feet. Although he had lost 20 pounds and did not fully recover until a month later, Taswell says he knows he did the right thing. "I am just happy and glad my father is doing well," says Taswell.

"I felt a real sense of relief after my transplant," says Calvin. "Now, I look at life a bit more seriously. After all, anything can happen at any time. I'm just glad I had the opportunity to receive this gift. And I thank God and my family, who were there for me through it all. I couldn't have done it without them."

The first laparoscopic living donor kidney transplant was performed at The University Hospital in November 1998. To find out more, call The University Hospital Kidney Transplant Program at 513-584-4956.



Living Donor Liver Transplantation

Between Father and Son

Ian and Harold Kaplan have a very special relationship. In 1979, Harold gave his son life, and 20 years later he had the opportunity to do the same once again. In 1999, Harold became the second living related liver donor in Ohio. Harold was given the opportunity to give his son, Ian, a very special gift—a future.

1996 was not an easy year for Ian. It was his senior year of high school. However, his thoughts were not occupied by the typical concerns of a 16-year-old. Ian was beginning to experience extreme fatigue and abdominal pains. At first, Ian and his doctors believed it was only an ulcer, but soon his condition worsened.

In January, Ian became very ill and was diagnosed with Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC), a disease that causes the ducts inside and outside the liver to narrow, resulting in inflammation, scarring and eventually cirrhosis of the liver. Then, in April, he was diagnosed with diabetes. Unfortunately, those weren't the only problems. A month later, doctors informed him that he had Crohns disease, an inflammatory bowel disease, which causes inflammation of the intestines.

At the time, Ian's father was away in Bosnia with the military. When Harold heard of his son's condition, he asked for permission to return to the United States to be with his family; a month later Harold returned home. The next few years were not easy on Ian and his family. "Ian's quality of life was very bad," Harold recalls. "He was miserable. He was itching so bad that his legs were rubbed raw, and he couldn't go to work or school."

One night, the Kaplans got a call from Ian's doctor. Ian's luck was turning around. Dr. Douglas Hanto had just completed his first living related liver transplant—the first procedure of its kind performed in the state of Ohio—and thought Ian would be a good candidate for the procedure. After numerous tests, the doctors determined that Ian and Harold were a match. "I was really excited, because I was feeling really terrible at the time about the prospect that my life might end," Ian recalls.

On Oct. 4, 1999, the transplant was successfully performed at The University Hospital. Ian's father returned home two weeks after the transplant. Ian had a small episode of rejection, but it was taken care of immediately. A week later, he had to undergo one more surgery, which was more painful than the first, to repair an artery. However, less than three weeks later, Ian returned home.

Harold says he is grateful for the opportunity to help and is thankful for Dr. Hanto and the medical advances available. He now speaks to try to encourage others to donate. "Donating is fantastic. It empowers you," Harold says. "It allows you to help and not sit and watch on the sidelines. Otherwise, you just wait and wait... now Ian has a future."

After the experience, Ian says he holds life with more regard. "It is more precious to me now, especially given the alternative," he says.

(continued)



Six months after his surgery, Ian was still regaining his strength, but he had returned to work and had moved into his own place. He now enjoys his music and playing in his band. Ian gives a few words of wisdom to future transplant recipients. “You will feel a lot worse before you feel better,” he comments. “I had forgotten what it was like to feel healthy!”

To find out more about living related liver donation, contact The University Hospital Liver Transplant Program at 513-584-9999.

Health Alliance™

Transplant Services

The University Hospital

Kidney Transplant Program 513-584-4956

Pancreas/Islet Transplant Program 513-584-3581

Liver Transplant Program 513-584-9999

Heart Transplant Program 513-584-7217

The Christ Hospital

Kidney Transplant Program 513-585-2493