

I first became an advocate for Organ Donation in high school. Recently a friend from high school reminded me how as we were all getting our driver's licenses I always would make sure that people considered choosing a D for donor.

When I was young my aunt was infected with Hepatitis C from a blood transfusion. It took a while to figure out why she felt so tired because she was one of the first to have this diagnosis. She worked at the primate center as a tech so she spent time researching and working with doctor's to figure out what was going on. The result was that she needed a liver transplant. She had three young boys and the family worked vacations and their life around being close enough to OHSU so that if she got the call they were ready. The call came when I was in high school. I remember being so excited for her family and then having a heavy heart thinking of the family who was suffering as we were rejoicing. My aunt was able to have many healthier years to see her boys grow, but however did have to have a second transplant since the Hepatitis C was still wreaking havoc on her body. For the second transplant I was an adult and accompanied her to some of her pre-transplant appointments. When she later passed, part of her wishes were for her body to be studied to further the science of both Hepatitis C and organ donation.

My next experience was with a living donor. My husband received a kidney from his sister. In fact without our Sequoia we donated I am not sure we would have made it to the pre-op appointments or the actual surgery day. In the day or two after his sister flew in for the transplant Portland was covered in ice and snow. With chains we were able to make it back and forth to Good Sam for the appointments leading up to the transplant. Driving on an empty 26 was strange, but parking downtown when we ate lunch was easy! Without this gift we would not have our busy family life these last 13 years. Our house is full of energy with three boys ages 12, 10 and 8 the Sequoia was what brought each kid home from

the hospital and our family on countless adventures that would not have been possibly without living donation.

A few years ago, my boys lost a friend in a tragic accident. What a tough conversation to have with your kids when just the day before they had seen their classmate and her sister happy in the Costco parking lot. As we had numerous conversations over the next few weeks processing this shocking event, the first that I saw some healing in my middle son's eyes was when we talked about the gift that Abby gave to others since she was able to donate her organs. I know that this gift of life was something that my kids held on to as they look for rainbows and later as they make and find Love Rocks.

When it came time to send our Sequoia on an adventure without us, we started looking at ideas of where we could donate it. When we saw that Donate Life Northwest was an option we knew that was the right place. We are once again a family who is affected by the need for an organ donor. My husband's kidneys are once again not functioning. We are in the process of getting listed for him to hopefully receive a gift of a kidney and pancreas. It would be amazing for him to live without diabetes and dialysis. I am hopeful that in the future we will be able to share our adventures after organ donation once again. Thanks Donate Life Northwest for educating our community about how organ donation gives families like ours hope.

