



Sue's got the **SCOOP!**

**Hamilton.
Our City.
Our Union.
Our Stories.**

Organ Donation **SAVED MY LIFE!**

I remember lying in my hospital bed when the doctors told me to get my affairs in order because I was going to die. **The only thing that would save my life was a transplant.** The doctors did not think I would live long enough to get one.

I heard the words leave the doctor's mouth, I saw the sadness in my family's eyes, but I couldn't fully grasp it. **How could this be happening?**

I wasn't ready. I certainly wasn't ready for the emotional roller coaster ride that was about to unfold. All I could think about was everything I still wanted to do, everything I would miss.

Kathleen Zavarise



I wanted to watch my 2 daughters graduate from university, start their careers and one day, maybe even have families of their own. My husband-my high school sweetheart, just retired from the City of Hamilton, and we had just begun planning the trips we had always dreamed of taking together. Suddenly, all those plans, all of those dreams, felt like they were slipping away. For any of this to happen, **I needed a miracle.** And in March 2023, because of the selfless generosity of a complete stranger, I received that miracle. **I received a liver and kidney transplant - a second chance at life.**

Now every day is a gift, a chance to make a difference, live with purpose and honour the legacy of the unknown hero who saved my life.



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Kathleen Zavarise - Everyday is a gift!

Before my transplant, I was so sick that I rarely left my bed unless it was for dialysis or medical appointments. I was on dialysis 5 times per week, and unfortunately, the only travelling my husband and I did was back and forth from the dialysis clinic. Dialysis kept me alive, but some days, it felt like it was draining the life out of me. I started to believe the doctors might be right- I might not make it in time.

Some of the nurses have since told me how heartbreaking it was to watch me deteriorate before their eyes. They, too, feared I would not survive long enough to get my transplant.

There were multiple ambulance trips from dialysis to the hospital due to dangerously low hemoglobin. It became a constant battle- one that I could only fight because of the generosity of blood donors.

I received hundreds of transfusions that kept me alive long enough to get my life-saving transplant. At first, I received them occasionally, then weekly, then every other day. Once again, it was complete strangers who saved my life.



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Since my transplant, I've been making the most of every single bonus day. I am grateful I will be there for my family.

I've travelled to Nashville, New York, Boston, and last year to Florida, where I celebrated my one year transplant anniversary at Disney.



Live your best life!

I've gone ziplining, rock climbing, completed the New York City Climb, the CN Tower Edgewalk, the CN Tower stair climb 1776 steps, and even skydiving!

I retired from the City of Hamilton last year; I could now dedicate my time to raising awareness and living my life to the fullest. I am the Director of Ontario for the Canadian Transplant Association, co-chair of the Patient Advocate Advisory Board, and patient ambassador for Canadian Blood Services and London Health Sciences. I also volunteer for the Kidney Foundation (recently awarded the Impact Award and Community Spirit and Leadership Award), the Transplant Ambassador Program and the Kidney Patient and Donor Alliance. - How do you possibly say thank you for saving your life?

You honour the gift you have been given. You make it count- and most of all, you pay it forward. Oh, and you never take another sunrise for granted!!

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One organ donor can save 8 lives and enhance the lives of up to 75 with tissue donation.

Every 3 days, someone dies waiting for a life-saving transplant.

Approximately 4% of Canadians donate blood, but 52% report needing blood products at some point in their lives or for a family member.

What can you do?

- REGISTER to be a donor
- TALK to your loved ones about your wishes, as THEY have the final say
- DONATE Blood
- CONSIDER living donation, share your spare!

Helpful Links:

<https://beadonor.ca/campaign/kathleen-zavarise>

<https://beadonor.ca/>

<https://www.blood.ca/en>

