

Caregiver Testimonial: Finding Hope



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My father died when I was very young. My mom became a single mother for young kids. She was everything to us – being both mom and dad – and the glue that kept the family together. Going through the Vietnam War, being in a refugee camp and coming to America without speaking the language was very hard for her. I cannot even imagine what she went through. Because I was the only girl and youngest child among boys, my mom and I became very close. We shared everything. We did everything together, and I could tell her anything. I loved hearing her tell stories of when she was young and how she met my dad. She was also the best cook! When I had my first child, my mom was there every step of the way, talking and encouraging me through it. I've always loved my mom. But it wasn't until I gave birth to my own son that I realized the depth of a mother's love and appreciated her so much more.

The journey of pain began with my mom's stroke and it escalated from there. She lived for a couple more years until her kidneys completely failed and had to be on dialysis. At the time, we didn't know anything about putting her on a waiting list for a kidney transplant. No options were given to us. I wish we had been given the option. Maybe with a new kidney, my mom would still be living today. She would enjoy seeing all of her grandkids and what they have become. She would have had the chance to see her youngest son get married. She would have been very happy and proud of our lives. My mom eventually passed away, but our story doesn't end there.

Later on, my oldest brother was also diagnosed with kidney failure. Fortunately, he received a kidney transplant. By this time, we had heard more about people getting kidney transplants because we knew someone in our community who had received one. My oldest brother (being the father figure he is) did not mention anything to our family about kidney donation. I think it's because he does not want to ask or put the burden on us. Surprisingly, before we knew anything, one of my other brothers decided to donate one of his kidneys. We only found out when my brothers told the rest of us about the surgery date. My oldest brother lived more than 10 years with our younger brother's kidney. He got to see the birth of his grandchildren and watch them grow up. However, my brother's kidney eventually gave out. He was put on a waiting list, but sadly he passed away before another kidney became available. We were grateful for the transplant that he did receive. It gave my brother a second chance. Thinking back to my mom, I sometimes still wonder if we only knew then what we know now about my brother's experience. I am sure one of her kids would have gladly given her a kidney.

When I was approached to help with making a quilt that highlights patients who are on the transplant waitlist, I did not hesitate. I wanted to help any way I could. Kidney transplant gave our family hope, and I know that if other families know about it, it would also give them hope.

For more information about transplant, please contact Quality Insights Renal Network 4 (QIRN4) by calling (800) 548-9205 or visit our website at www.qirn4.org.



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