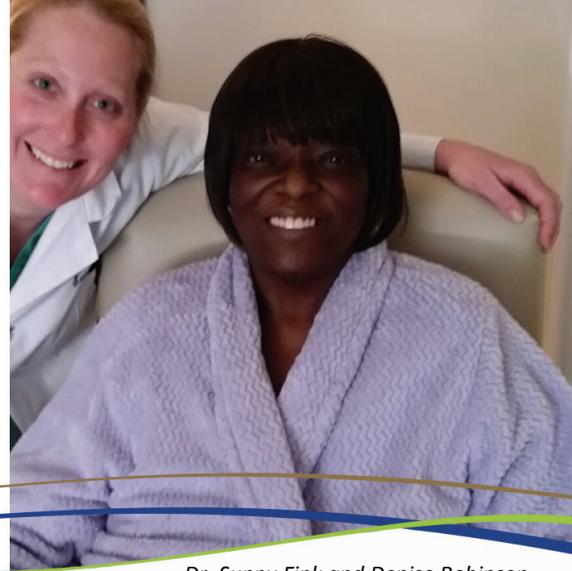


# Patient Testimonial: Becoming the “New” Old Me



*Dr. Sunny Fink and Denise Robinson*

I am Denise and I was discharged from Crozer Chester Medical Center on April 1, 2015. It was the start of National Organ Donor Awareness Month and my first day home as the “new” me. After three years and 11 months on dialysis, the four days I spent in the hospital for my transplant seemed to fly by. I was looking forward to all the new things I would be able to do with my free time and I felt really healthy –physically, spiritually and emotionally. I couldn’t remember the last time I felt this good.

I never doubted my decision to go for a transplant, even though it took me a year to make my evaluation appointment. I learned about transplant during a Lobby Day at my dialysis unit. The information I got from asking questions gave me a better understanding of how a transplant works. When I asked my nephrologist what he thought, he said, “Denise, you are too healthy and too young to stay on dialysis.” He said that I was making a great decision. His words and the kindness of the staff who cared for me at the Upland Dialysis unit kept me going forward on my journey. Not every day was a good one, but my faith made me stronger and I actually grew even closer to my religion. All of these things helped me stay positive and hopeful.

Sometimes when you are on dialysis, you start to think about yourself as a patient – because it takes up so much of your life. But I never forgot that as a wife and a mother, I was the one who needed to keep my family healthy too. That’s what Moms do - we take care of others. When I got sick, I made a promise to myself that my family would continue to be my number one priority. I am so very blessed to have friends around me who made me realize I needed to take care of ME first and let others be short-time substitute caregivers for my family and me. Once I accepted that, I realized that I didn’t need to feel guilty for putting myself first. I had to be healthy for me so that I would be around a long time to take care of my family.

Through it all, I felt like I had an entire “country of support” behind me. Everyone wanted this for me and they were going to go through it with me. When I talked to my husband about my decision, he said, “What if something happens to you?” I told him, “Something is going to happen to me. I’m going to get better.” From then on, he was and still is beside me every step of the way.

So, in this past year, I turned 50, I got a new kidney and I am going to become a grandmother for the first time. I’ve gone from worrying about being healthy enough to attend my youngest daughter’s high school graduation in 2016 to knowing I will be there to cheer, jump up and down, and celebrate how proud I am of her.

Also, I’m going to be able to do one thing that I love to do – travel. And I mean travel without having to leave the beach early because I have to go for treatment or be limited to where we can go because of the time it will take driving there in between treatments. The folks at the dialysis facility are great at making arrangements for you to receive treatment while you’re on vacation, but it felt like I could never take a vacation from dialysis. For almost four years, dialysis became my full-time job.

I’m also going back to work after I finish up a few more classes toward my degree. I am actually looking forward to going back to work!

People ask me how transplant has changed my life. Transplant has made me stronger and it has given me more to look forward to. It feels great to wonder, “How can I achieve something?” rather than “What will I do when something goes wrong?”

A few days ago, something happened that meant the most to me. It happened so naturally that I almost missed it. I was spending time with my daughter. Not doing anything special really, just being together with one another. She became really quiet and then looked at me and said, “You’re Mommy again! You have all this energy and we laugh like we used to!” It was then that I realized the “new” me after transplant is really the same person I always was – and I thank the Lord and my donor every day for giving me the ability to be “Mommy” again.



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