



WELCOME

It is the miracle of new life that is the spotlight of this Transplant Newsletter.

We share with you three extraordinary stories of transplant recipients, each of whom hoped and dreamed that someday they would be able to have children. Each of them are now blessed with wonderful families.

What makes these stories so remarkable is that these individuals never imagined that their lives, once fragile and tentative, could ever be so vibrant and full.

Read and celebrate these people's remarkable paths from reclaiming their lives to providing new life.



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Having Children After Transplant

This year as three children in Brooklyn celebrated their birthdays; their parents, all recipients of kidney transplants, watched as their kids did so many of the things that would be considered ordinary by most parents - blowing out the candles, opening presents and eating plenty of ice-cream and cake.

But for the parents these ordinary acts became extraordinary in so many ways.

Each looked on with a certain sense of wonderment, joy and gratitude. Each savored every precious moment. For this was a day that they could never have imagined taking place.

MY LITTLE MIRACLE

It was a Dora The Explorer birthday party for Sophia's daughter, Shanice.

Everything from the tablecloths, the plates and the cake were all decorated with Shanice's favorite cartoon character.



Shimon

Organizing all of the details for her daughter's three-year-old birthday party was like a dream come true for Sophia.

"This is my miracle child," says Sophia "You don't know how long I prayed to God to have a child. Thinking for so long that I couldn't," she said.

At 21 years old, Sophia's kidneys failed.

For nine years (and nine months she adds), Sophia waited. She waited for the call where the voice from the hospital on the other end would say, "you've matched."

"Waiting for almost ten years is a long time," says Sophia "and you do give up hope. You try to keep positive."

"You try to stay up. But there are so many days when you just say that all this is just too much," she says recalling the days when she would spend up to seven hours at the dialysis center.

And then one day that call from the Transplant Unit came.

"I was out the door and headed to the hospital, while they were still on the other end," Sophia says laughing.

That was in 2002 - One year later her daughter Shanice was born. Three years later she gave birth to her second child, Shimon (pictured) who she refers to as her "big ol' butterball".

"God gave me something so good and wonderful and I think it's maybe my reward for things not being so good in my life for such a long time," says Sophia.

"My doctors said I wouldn't live past 21. It's pretty remarkable when you come to think of it - don't you think?"

THE FUTURE IN FRONT OF MY EYES

Tyrone's son, Isaiah turned four this year and all the decorations at his birthday party were Sponge Bob.

"I always wanted to have a family. But I just stopped thinking about it," says Tyrone.



Imani and Isaiah
with Santa

When he was eighteen, Tyrone was diagnosed with Lupus. A year later he lost all of his renal function and spent the next two years on dialysis.

"Of course, I would think - why me? I am so young. Is this life worth living?" he says recounting a period of his life where living with dialysis was, "just like having a full time job."

"I just didn't understand why all this was going on and the only thing I kept asking myself was when would all this stop?" says Tyrone.

A normal life was what Tyrone yearned for. Nothing more than just having a job, a family and freedom. Things people take for granted. Things that, for so many years, were elusive for him.

"After a while, I just stopped thinking about those things. Everything was all about just making it through another day," he says.

Tyrone describes his transplant (his mother donated her kidney to him) as the time in his life when he was reborn.

Today, the simple dreams Tyrone once had are an everyday part of his life.

"Normal, that's what I am and I'm loving it," he says.

Tyrone now has a house, a full time job as a correctional facilities officer, a wife and two children, Isaiah and Imani.

Tyrone describes Imani as "wise beyond her years" and proudly brags about her being named "Student of the Month" in her first grade class.

"She is daddy's little girl," says Tyrone, "and that's just fine by me."

"Once I thought I never would have a future. And when I look at my children today I can now see that future right in front of my eyes."



Brooklyn Transplant



THE GREATEST GIFT OF LIFE

There are three moments in life that Lavista will always remember.

The first moment was nine years ago, when she was walking down Broadway with her mother. It was a normal Saturday afternoon of shopping when suddenly "the world just went black" and she fainted.

That was the day Lavista found out that her kidneys failed. She describes the following years of living with dialysis as "nothing short of hell."

The second moment happened five years later, when Lavista woke up in SUNY Downstate's recovery room. She had just undergone transplant surgery after receiving a kidney from her brother, Rashawn.

Lying in the recovery room and in pain, she was able to see Rashawn on the other side of the recovery room. As she was trying to make out how her brother was faring, a nurse came over and said, "your brother told me to tell you that he's alright and that he loves you."

And then the third moment came a few years later. This time also was in a hospital. But this moment on New Years Day 2003 was completely different from the last; it was when Lavista was handed her son Jaream to hold for the first time.

"I couldn't believe that I was holding this precious wonderful part of me in my arms. That I had given life to this beautiful baby boy," says Lavista.

"As I looked at my baby I just couldn't help but think how precious life was and how life could change so suddenly on a dime. A few years ago I was only thinking about living, surviving."

"Every moment is like a precious moment to me," she said. "But it's on my boy's birthday (this year a Spiderman theme prevailed) when I realize that the greatest gift of my life was being able to give life." ■



Lavista and Jaream

JUST DEALING WITH IT

Everyone has a mantra — a saying that one keeps repeating over and over in one's head to get through difficult times, to overcome obstacles, to achieve goals.

While undergoing dialysis for nine months, Anim's mantra was "Just deal with it."

"Saying those words let me get through some pretty difficult moments," he says. "It helped me to get from one day to the next."

He recalls his life on dialysis as a time where he would just walk around in a daze.

"My biggest fear was that I was going to be on dialysis forever," says Anim. "I am good at getting myself through hard times but this was getting to me. There would be days when I thought, my God this is really going to do me in."

"Dealing with it" was a phrase he learned from his mother.

"She would say to me you're faced with a tough situation. What choice do you have? You either deal with it or you die."

"Her life was a constant struggle," says Anim recounting an immigrant story of a young woman from Trinidad coming to this country alone, leaving her children behind, and earning enough money to eventually bring her family to the United States—Not to mention the struggles of adjusting to a new life and a new country.

"She got through those struggles and with grit and fortitude I knew I could too," he says. "This would not defeat me. This would just be another obstacle that I would overcome."

"I was going to live as normal a life as I could," says Anim who, while undergoing dialysis three times a week, worked as a security guard, standing on his feet for ten to eleven hours a day.

It was Anim's baby sister, Argelle, the one who always wanted to hang out with him and his friends when they were younger, the one who was the childhood nuisance, who was the sibling who matched and donated her kidney to him.

Getting a new lease on life, are the words often used by transplant recipients to describe the difference between the 'before' and 'after.'

Anim is no exception.

"It's definitely like getting a new lease on life," says Anim who now works as an Account Manager at a promotional company in Long Island.

"It's the simplest things like walking out the door and the sun hitting you in the face. Even food tastes better," he says.

But according to Anim, there is one more daily obstacle to face, making sure he gets to live a long and healthy life with his new kidney.

"Many people," says Anim, "think that after surgery they are out of the woods. That just cannot be farther from the truth."

"You need to constantly take care of yourself. Follow the rules. Follow a diet. Take your medicines. The hard work now really begins," he says. And of course Anim is dealing with it — happily. ■



Anim

DONOR INFORMATION GROUP

If you're considering living donor transplantation and want more information, potential donors are invited to attend the next meeting of the Donor Information Group. The meetings offer potential donors the opportunity to meet past donors and hear firsthand accounts of what to expect. Discussions led by the Transplant Coordinator are lively and informative and allow prospective donors to share their questions and concerns openly with individuals who have already been through the experience.

For more information about living donor transplantation, please call (718) 270-3169.

PRE-TRANSPLANT SEMINARS

The Transplantation Division's Pre-Transplant Tuesday Seminars are an important part of the kidney transplant experience. You will have an individual consultation with the Transplant Coordinator and Transplant Surgeon and attend a slide presentation on all aspects of the transplantation process, from pre-op to post-op.

For more information about kidney transplantation, please call us at : (718) 270-3169

www.downstate.edu/transplant

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RESEARCH



By
Dr. Moro Salifu

The Transplant Program at Downstate is committed to conducting ethical research that will enhance better outcomes for our patients. Over the years, our team of researchers has focused their research on metabolic complications of transplantation, such as diabetes, hypertension, and hyperlipidemia. The Transplant Program at Downstate is committed to conducting ethical research that will enhance better outcomes for our patients. ■