Erin, Pediatric Heart Recipient

Transplant Journey

Pediatric heart recipient Erin was just six months old when she was diagnosed with cardiomyopathy, a disease that severely weakened her heart. The youngest of four children, she spent the next year receiving treatments and undergoing various procedures. Despite these efforts, her health continued to decline. Erin was hospitalized with her heart function at just one percent when her parents received the news that, without a heart transplant, she would not survive.

Erin was placed on the national transplant waiting list at 18 months old. Just nine days later, she received the heart she desperately needed through the generosity of a pediatric organ donor and the donor's family. The transplant surgery was a success, and Erin got the chance to have a happy childhood. Her family constantly marveled at her progress as they watched little Erin chase after her older siblings and eventually grow up to play basketball and lacrosse. From Erin's first day of school all the way up to graduating from college, they treasured every milestone of their special heart recipient.

Life as a Heart Recipient

More than 23 years post-transplant, Erin continues to live a full life. She has able to begin a rewarding career, celebrate at her sisters' weddings, become an aunt many times over, and be there for her family when they needed her, just like they have been there for her. Erin has also found love of her own, recently marrying an amazing guy to share adventures with — ranging from camping, hiking and kayaking, to homeownership and cooking.

As a heart recipient, Erin does not take one moment for granted because she realizes that she almost did not have a life at all. Her donor family's selfless decision to help others through organ donation is a gift that means everything to Erin; it is the gift that has made everything possible.