



Telling Your Story – One Person at a Time

by Lori Hartwell



Everyone has a story. Unfortunately, not everyone tells their story for fear of being judged, shyness, or the belief that

other people are not interested. I have learned that telling my story can save lives.

I have grown up telling my story of how I survived with chronic kidney disease. I always receive responses like “you are so young to have kidney problems” or “are you okay now?” These comments remind me of the lack

of education among the general public of CKD and what causes it.

Looking back, I missed opportunities to educate people about how to prevent CKD and the importance of organ donation. Today, I take every opportunity to tell my story and use my experience to help educate the public.

For instance, recently I was returning a pair of shoes. The sales lady asked me why I was returning the shoes. I replied that because I had a kidney transplant, sometimes my feet swell and the shoes feel too tight. She said “my aunt is on dialysis and waiting for a transplant.”

I asked her if she knew the cause of her aunt’s kidney failure and she replied, “I don’t know.” I told her the two main causes of kidney failure are diabetes and high blood pressure and that she and her family are at greater risk because a family member has kidney disease. I asked her if she has ever been tested.

“No I haven’t. So how would I know if I am at risk?” she asked. I told her when she has a check-up that she should ask for a glomerular filtration rate (GFR) test. Also, she should ask her doctor about whether her blood pressure is in a normal range, if she has diabetes and whether she maintains normal blood sugar levels.

Since I had a captive audience, I furthered my spiel... “Over 26 million adult Americans have CKD (1 in 7) and many don’t even know it. Over 100,000 people are on the transplant waiting list. It is important for everyone to discuss organ donation with their family and let them know their wishes. Also, many states have websites (California’s is www.donatelifeca.org) that will allow you to register your decision to be a donor.”

**KNOW
YOUR
NUMBERS!**

Blood Pressure
120/80

Blood Sugar
80-120

Protect your kidneys.
Get tested often!
Tell a friend.

weKAN Live & Give is a publication of the Renal Support Network, a patient-run nonprofit organization whose mission is to identify and meet the non-medical needs of those affected by chronic kidney disease.

weKAN Patient Activists serve to mobilize, educate, motivate, and empower fellow chronic kidney disease survivors to advocate for themselves and for one another. Together we *can* make a difference.

Newsletter Staff

Editor-in-Chief

Lori Hartwell

Managing Editor; Layout & Design

Jodie Younse

Editorial Coordinator

Dawn Dungun

Distribution

Renal Support Network

Contact Information

Renal Support Network

866-903-1728 Toll Free

9 AM–5 PM Pacific Time

Submissions, Newsletter Business

info@RSNhope.org, or mail to RSN

Address Changes & Distribution

Live & Give Distribution Dept.

Renal Support Network

1311 N. Maryland Ave.

Glendale, CA 91207

info@RSNhope.org

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www.RSNhope.org

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org) that will allow you to register your decision to be a donor.”

She was hungry for information, so I happily handed her my business card and told her she could find out more at our website. All this over a pair of returned shoes! We never know who our story will help educate, encourage, or empower.

In this issue of Live & Give we are exploring ways you can tell your story to help others. But remember when you tell your story, use it as a platform to help educate your audience with ways they can help themselves and their loved ones.

We need to serve the kidney community by instilling health, happiness, and hope through education, advocacy, and awareness... one person at a time.

Chronically Yours,

Lori Hartwell

President & Founder

of the Renal Support Network