

For Immediate Release
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SGMC Employee Donates Kidney to Save a Life

In 2017, Timothy Daugherty started having sudden attacks of pain in his feet. The pain was persistent and after a few months Tim decided it was time to see a doctor. A blood test was administered and when the results came back he was diagnosed with stage 3, focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS), kidney disease.

FSGS occurs when the kidneys develop scar tissue that begins to impact the filters within the kidneys. When these filters do not function properly impurities are not removed from the blood and protein starts to enter the urine. There are several treatments options, but the more severe cases require a kidney transplant.

"I was shocked when they told me I would need a kidney transplant. It felt like a nightmare," said Tim.

At only 28 years old, Tim had a wife, Stevie, and together they had two small daughters Teagan and Hayden.

"I just tried to stay positive for my family. I didn't want them to know how it really made me feel," shared Tim. "Not a lot scared me, but this did.

Desperate to find a donor, Tim posted shared his story across social media and on local billboards. However, it was his wife, a surgical technician at South Georgia Medical Center, who would come home with news about her co-worker that would change his life forever.

When Rebecca (Becky) Smith, a fellow surgical technician at SGMC and Health Services Management Technician at the 476th Aerospace Medical Flight at Moody Air Force Base, learned about her friend Stevie's husband and his condition she wanted to help.

"In April of 2020, I made the choice to get tested to see if I could be a kidney donor. I was already a blood match and after multiple tests, it was determined I was a full match for Tim," explained Becky.

Tim stayed positive and had faith that something good was going to come soon. About a month after Becky got tested, Tim received a call from Emory hospital explaining that Becky was a complete match.

Tim exclaimed, "I felt like a weight had been lifted off of me. I couldn't believe it. This woman didn't know me from Adam and was about to donate her kidney to me."

Initially, Becky had some concerns regarding her ability to continue her career in the Air Force and the possibility of her own remaining kidney failing in the future. But she chose to move forward in the donation process despite the unknown.

On March 5, 2021, nearly five years after his diagnosis, Tim and Becky underwent the surgery for the kidney transplant.

The physician and team at Emory checked on the two patients every few hours to ensure they were doing alright after the procedure. The surgery was a success and all of Tim's levels were perfect.

Tim was beyond grateful, stating, "Becky was a blessing sent from God. She will never know how much my family and I appreciate her for going through what she did."

"The truth is, it didn't really hit me that I was saving a life until I saw Tim after the surgery," said Becky.

Becky had always been a registered organ donor, but never imagined it would happen while she was living.

"Despite my initial concerns, I didn't hesitate in my decision," said Becky. "I will never regret the choice I made. I not only gave Tim a chance to live his life, but also gave Stevie her husband, and their children a father without the worries of what would happen if Tim's condition worsened."

Tim's advice for those who find themselves in similar situations and need a transplant--- have faith.

"You are allowed to scream about it and you're allowed to cry about it, but never give up. Have faith in God. Your time will come. Be patient and stay positive," said Tim.

April is National Donate Life Month where people are encouraged to register as organ donors and help save the lives of others like Tim.

Organ donation, with the primary exception of living kidney donation, occurs after someone has died from an injury that results in brain death. Ninety percent of people say they would be an organ donor but unfortunately, only 30 percent of those are actually registered.

One donor can save eight lives and improve the lives of dozens more. To become a registered organ and tissue donor today, visit donatelifegeorgia.org.

Photo cutline for Daugherty: Tim and wife Stevie with their two daughters

Photo cutline for Becky Smith: Becky Smith and her two siblings

Photo cutline for donor story: Stevie, Tim and Becky

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