

KATHY'S JOURNEY OF RESTORED SIGHT THROUGH TRANSPLANTATION

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Matt with his family

Kathy's journey to restored sight began after her cataract surgery in the fall of 2023. The procedure that she expected would improve her vision did not deliver the results that she was expecting and led to the discovery of underlying vision issues.

“After my cataract surgery, everyone kept asking me, have you seen the bright lights? Have you seen the bright colors? And I was like...no,” Kathy recounted.

After surgery, swelling persisted in her cornea, and her physician, Dr. Ketcherside, explained that she had Fuchs corneal dystrophy. Fuchs dystrophy is a disease that affects the innermost layer of cells in the cornea. Oftentimes, it is not diagnosed until later in life, and many patients require a cornea transplant to restore clear vision. For Kathy, the answer to restored sight would be the gift of cornea donation and transplantation from two eye donors.

Transplant recipient, Kathy is so grateful for the gift of restored sight from her donors.

While Kathy was anxious about the surgery, Dr. Ketcherside explained the procedure, reassuring her that it was safe and generally successful. With a newfound sense of hope, Kathy received her first partial-thickness corneal transplant on her right eye in October and a second of the same type of transplant on her left eye in November. In a partial-thickness transplant, only a thin layer of cells that have stopped working in the recipient's cornea are replaced with donor tissue. The result for many patients is a less invasive procedure, and quicker healing time.

When the stitches came out from her first transplant, Kathy experienced a remarkable change while watching television.

“All of a sudden, the black and whites were just brighter on the show we were watching

on television,” said Kathy. “The other eye was more like looking through a light sepia color.”

Since receiving her transplants, Kathy has resumed hobbies like quilting and enjoys more daily independence. Before her surgeries, Kathy would rely on her husband, Steve, to read small print and drive. Now, she and Steve are back to some of their favorite time together, watching the night sky.

“My husband and I like to watch meteors,” said Kathy. “I was having trouble pinpointing the smaller stars and planets. After the transplant, we saw a big meteor at the same time, and it was a ‘woah’ moment.”

Kathy is grateful for the gifts of sight that her donors have given to her.

“It's just been a miracle,” remarked Kathy. “It's just opened up a whole new world.”