

BARBARA

RECIPIENT OF: MENISCUS ALLOGRAFT



COACH CHEERS AGAIN AFTER TISSUE TRANSPLANT

As a cheerleading coach and life-long athlete, Barbara was accustomed to falls and strains. Over the years however, those falls and strains caused serious damage to Barbara's knees.

"In the fall of 2009, I began having pain and swelling in my right knee," said Barbara. *"By January 2010, I was unable to ski or play tennis."*

Soon the pain in her knee began impacting her everyday activities.

"I found that the long hours standing and working out with my team were becoming increasingly painful," said Barbara.

After going through physical therapy, Barbara still found no relief from the constant pain. As a result, she opted for surgery to repair what was thought to be a torn meniscus.

"During the surgery, my doctor discovered a hole in the meniscus," she said. *"During a subsequent consultation, he told me that the only cure would be a tissue transplant."*

Barbara planned to delay the surgery until after her long-awaited family vacation to Alaska. After an increase in pain and swelling however, she decided to move forward with the process. She was advised to stay near home so when a match became available, she could head into surgery. While with her team in the Pocono Mountains, Barbara got a call saying a donor had been secured.

"My team and other coaches knew I was waiting for a call and gave me a big send off as I left to return home," she said.

Due to the intricate nature of Barbara's procedure, she was unable to put weight on her leg for six weeks. During those six weeks, she wore a brace that extended from her ankle to her upper thigh. She used the brace as a way to start conversations about tissue donation, even conversing with local doctors.



After six weeks, Barbara removed the brace and for the first time put limited weight on her donated meniscus.

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"I had absolutely no pain and was able to walk unassisted within two days," said Barbara.

After rebuilding her strength through regular exercise, she returned to playing tennis in the spring of 2011. That same summer, Richards and her family made it to Alaska for their long-delayed vacation.

"We took our postponed trip to Alaska for three weeks during that summer and I was able to hike, horseback ride and raft without worry," she said.

Because of the gift of donation, Barbara has a new approach to life.

"I feel I was given a huge gift from the tissue donor and want to respect that gift by doing my share to stay healthy" said Barbara.

Barbara continues to speak openly about organ and tissue donation to friends, family and the cheerleading team she once coached.

"I hope that seeing me benefit from the generosity of a stranger would set an

example for them and their families to do the same," she said.

After making a full recovery, Barbara continues to be grateful for the gift. *"If I was able to speak to my donor, I would be humbled by their selfless contribution," she said.*

"I've always believed that the measure of a person's life is not the job they held, the "titles" they've earned, or the outward trappings of "success" that they have acquired, but rather the lives they have touched along their journey."