



Michelle, Donor Daughter & Tissue Recipient Throughout my childhood, volunteerism was a large and common theme in my home thanks to my father, Paul. My dad was an active volunteer in the local firehouse, serving as president, and a volunteer EMT. His other volunteer opportunities only increased as my sister and I got older with us alongside him to help. We spent our weekends cleaning up the local nature trails, re-shelving books at the library, visiting the elderly who could not drive, or being involved with blood drives. The amount of time spent helping others was too large to count. When I turned 16 and got my driver's license, without question I listed myself as an organ donor, something he was always passionate about given his volunteer work in emergency settings. Less than nine months after registering myself as an organ donor, my father died suddenly of a stroke. For days we stayed in the hospital praying for his recovery, but the pressures continued to increase. Upon being notified of his untimely death, we were contacted by Gift of Life in Philadelphia. For two days he held on with his last brain wave. I like to think that he held on so the recipients of his organs could reach the hospitals with the snow storm we had. He was able to help eight organ recipients and around 100 tissue/ligament recipients. At the time I didn't think the tissue donations were that big of a deal - until I had to receive one just six years later.

In October 2011, I underwent knee surgery for a ligament repair and received a quadriceps tendon from a 26-year-old man, Uriah, from Virginia. I'm told by his family that Uriah had an appetite for life and was soon to be married. This young man changed my life in a way I can never repay him. Following my father's death I suffered from depression and was rapidly gaining weight, putting me at a higher risk for strokes like my Dad. The tendon Uriah's family donated gave me a new life.

I began running to reduce my weight and the depression. Just nine months after my surgery, I ran my first half marathon and came off of medication. His gift didn't stop there. Uriah continues to inspire me everyday that I get the opportunity to run. When the long runs get hard, I think of him and how grateful I am that he has given me the miles to take in all that life has to offer. While I have not met his family yet I hope they are able to meet me someday.

