

Jennifer Maki – Rim to Rim Bio

Jennifer Maki, BSN, RN, CDN

Jennifer Maki is a hemodialysis nurse, living kidney donor, and passionate advocate for organ donation. She has spent over a decade caring for patients with kidney failure and now serves veterans at the VA hospital in Indianapolis. When her mom battled cancer in 2014, doctors warned that dialysis might be in her future. From that moment on, Jennifer knew she would step up when the time came.

In 2024, she followed through—donating through the National Kidney Registry’s voucher program at Ascension St. Vincent in Indianapolis. As an O-negative donor, Jennifer knew her kidney could make an even bigger impact. Initially, when Jennifer told her mom she planned to donate, her mom refused to accept the kidney. Jennifer made it clear she was going to donate regardless—there were too many people waiting for a second chance, and this was a decision she had carried with her for years. Her mom eventually agreed, but in a twist of fate, just 6½ weeks after Jennifer’s donation, she chose to accept a deceased donor kidney, allowing their family to keep the voucher in case it's ever needed.

Jennifer’s kidney was flown to Texas for a hard-to-match recipient. His wife, who wasn’t a match for him, donated the same day to someone else, continuing the chain and carrying the gift of life further.

Jennifer is taking on the Rim-to-Rim Challenge to raise awareness about living donation and prove that life after donation can be just as strong—if not stronger—than before. For her, this hike is a chance to show the world that kidney donation doesn’t slow us down—it lifts us up. Donation profoundly impacted her life, deepening her appreciation for health, resilience, and the power of giving. It also connected her to a community of inspiring people and strengthened her commitment to advocacy.

She’s not a hardcore athlete—just a regular person who believes in pushing her limits and living fully. When she's not in scrubs, Jennifer loves spending time outdoors and taking on new adventures with her 12-year-old daughter, Julianna—proving that life after donation isn't just normal, it's extraordinary.