

Robin Ernstes

When I was 59, I donated my kidney to a stranger. A 5k charity race my family founded and organized for 13 years had somewhat run out of steam and I was looking for what was next. One Sunday morning, a 30-minute program popped up on tv about the transplant center at Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta. By the end of the show, I was committed. Dialysis looked terrible, and the stories of those who died waiting on the transplant list were even more depressing. I had a spare. I donated 4 months later.

I am a wife, mother, grandmother, and aspiring athlete who loves a challenge. I love all things that involve the outdoors and being active. Before donation, I ran, biked, worked out, played tennis, skied, hiked, and camped. I still do all of those things. Since donating, I've added ultramarathons and triathlons, including a half Iron (70.3). Kidney donation hasn't changed a thing—in fact, it's made me better. I'm more aware of preserving my health and I don't take my good fortune in that way for granted.

I'm glad for what donating my kidney has given me. I'd do it again if I could.