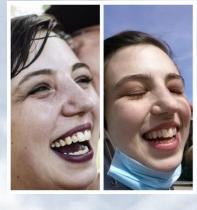


Rebekah Hambor: "I am fully living life as a Heart & Double Lung Transplant Recipient"!

Hi, my name is Rebekah (Salser) Hambor and I was born in 1985 and first diagnosed at 5 months of age as having **Transposition of the Great Arteries** and holes between each of my heart's ventricles **(VSD)** and atriums **(ASD)**. My first surgery at 8 months was considered palliative and was not open-heart. The surgeon at Nationwide Children's Hospital banded my **Pulmonary Artery** and closed my **Patent Ductus**.



At 4 ½, I went into **Failure to Thrive**, a catheterization was performed and it was discovered I also had **Pulmonary Hypertension**. PH is elevated blood pressure in my lungs - higher than a normal person has. It was also found that my **Mitral Septal Valve** leaked a little and that I had an **Atrophied Right Ventricle**. At 5, I went through open-heart surgery, they closed the ASD, surgically corrected the transposition, and left my heart situated in a position which minimized the PH. I still had the VSD and the atrophied Right Ventricle and the PH. The title of my overall condition was "**Eisenmenger's Syndrome**" – the VSD and the state of my heart along with the PH would mean my heart eventually would fail.

I really did well until I was 17 when the **cyanosis** and Failure to Thrive started again. It was recommended that I go on a newly approved drug, Tracleer, that was aimed at controlling the PH. I did well on Tracleer until New Years Day 2011 when I had my first bout with **Congestive Heart Failure** (CHF). From there, new drugs aimed at controlling the damage the PH was causing were added but I continued to deteriorate, hospitalizations were frequent, and eventually it felt like I was in the hospital fighting the CHF as much as I was out.

In the fall of 2013 it became clear that I was soon to face a Heart & Double Lung Transplant. My body could not wait for the testing that would mean I could be formally "listed" and on February 19th, 2014 my other organs began to fail. I was "life-flighted" to the hospital to await a donor heart and lungs. I was stabilized and spent the next 6 weeks hooked to an **Epinephrine IV** in the Heart Failure Unit. On March 28th the word finally came that a "Perfect Match" had been found. I was in surgery for 4 hours, sitting up in a chair 12 hours later, and was out of the ICU in 3 days. The recovery was hard, and long, and I came home to my family at 8 weeks.

I have had 2 short hospitalizations since, one week for **Pneumonia** and another for the **CMV virus** that is common post- transplant. Post-transplant 7 months, and soon to be 30 years old, I now feel better than I have ever felt in my life! I am able to run with my son (who was carried for me by my cousin and was born in 2008). At 6 years old, Gavin has never seen me as pink as I am now and we can now run together! I have to protect myself from the things that I breathe that may harm me, due to my **reduced immunity**—not easily done in a home full of kids and dogs. And while it's hard to think about what the donor family lost, I am so very grateful! I have been blessed!!

I have been involved in Mended Hearts for several years, have learned a lot, made many friends, and am both encouraged and encouraging as we share our heart success stories! If you've had similar experiences, or would like to talk to Rebekah, her contact information is listed below!