

# INSPIRING HOPE

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

Hi, my name is Rebekah (Salsler) 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 19<sup>th</sup>, 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 28<sup>th</sup> 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!**

**Mended Hearts of Central Ohio**

www.MendedHeartsCentralOhio.org - Rebekah.Hambor@gmail.com

*It is great to be alive – and to help others*