# The Little Red Heart 5K: LifeShare OK

We all had *one heart* going into the event: Honoring organ, eye, and tissue transplant donors, their families, and also recipients.

November 6, 2019 By Karen Hoyt

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Karen Hoyt is a blogger who has a story about hepatitis C, cirrhosis, end-stage liver disease, liver cancer, and liver transplantation. This excerpt first appeared on Karen's I Help C blog.

I recently took part in The Little Red Heart 5K: LifeShare OK and it was way way over the top fun. This year, it was an honor to serve on the planning committee under our chairperson, Susannah Hooper from Aiden's Legacy. Heather Dean, who is currently director of Quite a Lot, including Public Relations for LifeShare, invited me to help last fall. What an energized group of people, and we all had one heart going into the event: Honoring organ, eye, and tissue transplant donors, their families, and also recipients.

Gavin and Me The Little Red Heart 5K: LifeShare OK

I honor my liver donor with every breath taken. There is nothing like the feeling of almost dying… literally getting chemo blasted and fading fast…. and then living this marvelous life of mine. I've always been emotional, meaning other peoples stories get inside my heart. You can call it caring, empathy, or love. It can even be called co-dependency, but I'm involved with my loved ones. Gavin and his family are now part of my circle of love.

Being involved with Gavin's life includes being friends with his mom. From the moment his aunt contacted me, I wanted to know him. As I carry him under my heart and ribcage, thoughts of his story remain with me constantly. Every movement in my body is impacted by his life and passing.

Transplant Stories

When speaking to families of organ donors, I become intertwined with their stories also. It's all of our story, really. It's about giving and receiving life. Every donor mom represents my donor mom. Every donor dad, brother, sister, son, or daughter touches me deeply.

I got to meet a donor's wife this fall when speaking at a Celebration of Life. After arriving at The Little Red Heart 5K: LifeShare OK last week, there she was with her children. I kept an eye on her all day. My heart hovered with hers. She is a courageous single mom, much like my donor mom. She is showing up bravely for her kids, just like my donor mom. Our hearts swelled so huge, that we let the tears roll and we embraced before, and after, the race.

Another donor mom was there with her husband and children. She gave the gift of life also. It was less recent, and her heart was steady. Susannah chaired our event, is still moving through stages of grief, but the pain is less acute. Her pride and joy were very evident when she spoke of why she was helping to keep her son's memory alive by participating in The Little Red Heart 5K: LifeShare OK and also the work she does for Aiden's Legacy.

That's why we're all there. Recipients, living donors, donor families, and staff are there to keep the story, and the memory of their loved one, alive.

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