



Thank  
you

*Dear Donor Family*

Hi my name is Grace. I am 17, and this is my story. I was a competitive gymnast my whole life. Everything I did revolved around gymnastics; it was the one thing I could turn to at the end of a hard day that would make me happy. The people there were my second family, and the gym became my second home.

One day, I simply lost all of that when I first tore my meniscus. I had my first surgery my freshman year of high school. Gymnastics no longer became an option in my life, so I thought I would try track. I didn't even get one meet in before I tore my meniscus again and fractured my tibia plateau. I had my second surgery the summer going into my sophomore year; the surgeries were seven months apart. For a little while, I began to feel better, but running was no longer going to be an option for me, as well as any impact activities.

I was also told that I may need a knee replacement at 25, which is a very scary thing to think about when you are only 16. I tried to find happiness in something new, which was Pilates. I loved it and did it for a couple of months when my knee began to hurt again. I tried to brush it off, but, eventually, it got to a point where I could no longer walk without extreme pain and got no relief from sitting down. I went back to the surgeon to see if I had any options left.

This time we decided to go with a noninvasive treatment which was my PRP injection. I prayed for this to work and be the end; however, sadly it wasn't, and I lived for many more months with that pain. This is when the option of a meniscus transplant was brought into the picture. I had to really weigh my options and decide if I could go through another surgery, both mentally and physically, especially knowing the long recovery that came with it. I decided that if there was anything I could do to not miss out on something as small as powderpuff football, or running to my car to make curfew, or be able to play with my dog, or go in the ocean with my cousins I was willing to do it. My mom and I called in and said we were going to proceed with the meniscus transplant. We scheduled it for as soon as possible during my junior year.

I knew going into this surgery that I was only going to get a better quality of life because someone else had lost theirs. This was a very hard thing for me to process because there is so much sadness that comes in knowing that. However, there is even more gratitude. I don't even know how to begin to express how grateful I am to be given this second chance with my knee, which is only because of your loved one's generosity, as well as your family's. While to others this may just seem like a "little" piece of cartilage, to me it is the best gift I have ever received.

Life is all about the "little" things that fit together to bring us happiness and joy, kind of like completing a puzzle. I am a month out from surgery, and I can lay in bed and not feel pain for the first time in 2 years. That gives me hope: hope I lost after the second surgery, hope I never thought I would get back. I am looking forward to doing pilates, powderpuff, playing with my dog, and going in the ocean with cousins. So to end this, I want to say thank you to your family and your loved one for being the final "little" piece to my puzzle that will bring joy and happiness back into my life. I am so beyond grateful.