



Video Transcript: Earnestine's Story

Kidney Resource Services — Earnestine's Story

Earnestine Johnson: It was around 2008 when they told me my kidneys was going bad. I didn't know something 'til I went to the doctor.

Carolyn Short, RN: Most people don't even know they have kidney disease. It's almost a silent disease. You don't see symptoms until you're close to actually failing.

One of the things that makes the Kidney Resource Service Program so unique is the fact that we identify people early and we can do a lot of navigating through the system in trying to keep them off dialysis for as long as possible.

EJ: She calls once a month and asks me how I'm feeling, if I need anything. If my medicine is ok and whatever do she need to help me with.

CS: I worked with her, answered a lot of her questions, what type of dialysis did she want to do. I also reviewed her monthly labs. We started doing a lot of diet education. People that start dialysis who are prepared for it, do a lot better. Their whole outcome is different.

EJ: I was on dialysis for one year. I would go three times a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays and Saturdays. And I was doing four hours each day.

Marie Johnson, Earnestine's daughter: Carolyn told her what she needed to do — and to follow the strict diet that they gave her.

EJ: You've got to watch your weight and what you eat and how much fluids you take. Don't take too much fluid in. That's the number one thing.

CS: We even are identifying people and helping them to start thinking about a transplant even before they start dialysis, which can mean a big difference in their quality of life. People were discouraging her, saying she might be too old. So, I really encouraged Earnestine to have a nice talk with her nephrologist.

EJ: A lot of people was telling me, "Now, Miss Johnson, you're too old to have a kidney transplant."

Mark Deierhoi, MD: Chronologic age is not a really important factor. A patient who is 73 but is otherwise relatively healthy is still a very good transplant candidate.

CS: The next step was getting her a referral to transplant center. I also made a referral to our transplant department so that they could actually contact the center and to also work with Earnestine.

Devin Eckhoff, MD: The University of Alabama Birmingham — it's the only transplant center here in the state of Alabama and we're a Center of Excellence, usually in the top 5% of kidney volumes at the national level.

CS: Once the transplant center is identified, I will work with them to make sure that they are doing all of their testing.

DE: The better shape they can go in and the more compliant they are with their physicians' recommendations, they're more likely to have a good outcome. It's the attention to detail, someone getting labs — and we love having partnerships. It makes a big difference.

MJ: To this day after, even after the surgery she's calling, want to make sure we are ok. Is it anything we need? Carolyn's been a real blessing.

EJ: I drive and pick up my great-grandbaby from kindergarten every day. I pick up pecans in the yard. I'm very active. And I'm lucky to be alive.

CS: The Kidney Resource Service Program is so important in maintaining a good quality of life for our members, and also, it's saving a lot of money in the long run.

MJ: I want to thank Carolyn for all her help.

EJ: We thank Carolyn — the whole family.

MJ: Yep. Thank you, Carolyn.