

ERICA

RECIPIENT OF: BONE AND CARTILAGE



YOUNG ATHLETE RETURNS TO SPORTS AFTER BONE AND CARTILAGE TRANSPLANT

Erica was 14 years old when she began experiencing knee pain, which the family believed to be a result of a recurring sports-related injury. After three weeks of pain with no improvement, Erica's mother, Angie, decided to have her visit the Rocky Mountain Youth Sports Medicine Institute for an exam. Angie was convinced that Erica had hyperextended her knee and would probably require a couple weeks of physical therapy.

"As she sat on the exam table, she asked me the innocent question, 'What if they say I need to have surgery' and we both laughed because it couldn't possibly be that bad," said Angie.

After a thorough examination including x-rays, the doctor diagnosed Erica with Osteochondritis Desiccans Lesion of the knee, or OCD, which is a softening of the bone due to a blunt force injury or repetitive motion. Pain from OCD typically presents itself significantly after the original injury occurs. Erica's doctor explained that she had likely been living with the condition for years and that the bone had progressively softened until it caused pain to catch her attention.

"The diagnosis made perfect sense, since Erica plays the back row on her club volleyball team and is frequently hitting the floor to dive after balls," said Angie.

Erica's doctor scheduled a surgery to scrape out the damaged bone and then replace it with bone marrow from another part of Erica's leg. Angie was hopeful for a successful procedure and 100 percent

recovery, so her daughter could rejoin her volleyball squad and regain her quality of life.

The surgery began with a scope to assess the damage and found that Erica's cartilage was shredded due to the softened bone that wasn't able to support it. At this point, Erica's surgical team determined she actually needed a bone/cartilage graft to replace the damaged tissue in her knee. Thanks to a generous tissue donation from an anonymous donor, Erica was the lucky recipient of a bone and cartilage transplant.



"I was relieved that Erica was able to get such a well-matched graft that would help her heal and be back to full activity in nine months, but I also felt incredibly heartsick for the parents and family of the 15-year-old who wasn't going to get the chance to run, jump and live life like Erica would on her new knee," said Angie.

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Angie is thankful for all of the support Erica received from family, friends and her medical team throughout her treatment. Erica's recovery was successful and she is currently practicing to join her high school's golf team this spring.

"Erica continues to build strength in her leg, but still laughs at how little her calf is compared to the other leg. Her classmates still freak out a little when they see the big scar running across her knee, but she sees it as another distinction that makes her Erica," said Angie.

Angie never expected her healthy, athletic 14-year-old daughter to need a tissue donation, but when the unexpected happened, both Angie and Erica were whole-heartedly appreciative for the generous gift provided to them by a young donor. And they send their warmest wishes and love to the donor family.

"We pray for the family who lost their 15-year-old and hope that God has given them comfort and strength. And in my prayers I thank them for the perfectly-fitting gift that they gave Erica," said Angie.

