

## A Surgical Nurse Experiences the Firsthand Impact of Tissue Donation

Heather Burnham|Tissue Recipient

*“As a surgical nurse, I am amazed at how donation can change thousands of lives. I am forever grateful.” -Heather Burnham, tissue recipient*



If you live in Montana, Heather Burnham says, you live in the outdoors. That’s certainly true for Heather, as outdoor recreation activities like skiing, hiking and biking are an integral part of her lifestyle. As a surgical nurse at North Valley Hospital in Whitefish, MT, Heather’s job also requires her to be on her feet and moving throughout the day. After tearing her ACL, however, she worried her ability to lead an active lifestyle was no longer possible.

While attempting to step onto a boat, Heather’s foot became caught in between the boat and the dock, and she heard her knee pop. Forty-two years old at the time of the injury, Heather’s doctor recommended the use a donor graft to repair her knee, as the recovery process for traditional repairs can be more difficult for people over the age of 35. Since having the surgery, Heather feels better every day and is easing back into her active lifestyle.

Heather’s support for donation extends beyond her own experience as a recipient. As a surgical nurse, she has seen the incredible impact that tissue donation can have on the lives of recipients. When her father was ill with leukemia, Heather tried to donate her stem cells to him, though she ultimately wasn’t a match. After a match was found, she witnessed her father experience a prolonged and enhanced quality of life.

Heather is taking recovery one day at a time and looks forward to getting back to the outdoor recreation activities that bring her joy.

