



STL Nurse Spends 26 Years Helping Others, Now in Search of Kidney Donor

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ST. LOUIS - Yelena Gass-Bronstein spent her entire career as a registered nurse at Barnes-Jewish Hospital. Now, she's counting on her colleagues to save her life.

Roughly 15% of the U.S. adult population will develop kidney disease, and Gass-Bronstein is one of the 90,000 people in the U.S. who currently need a kidney transplant. In order to avoid the “miserable” experience of dialysis, she is searching for a living kidney donor who would be willing to donate a kidney, as soon as possible.

“I helped so many people during my career, and now I need help myself,” Gass-Bronstein said. “The bottom line is that in order to survive, I will need an organ. All those prayers and support — I have lots of people who responded with emotional responses, that they’re praying for me, that they’re wishing me the best. And it’s very meaningful to me, of course. It means a lot to me. But I need to find an organ.”

Gass-Bronstein isn’t used to being on this side of healthcare. She worked at Barnes-Jewish Hospital for 26 years and spent months on the frontlines during the COVID-19 pandemic. While Gass-Bronstein has been “sick with kidney disease for quite a long time,” she still managed to help others.

Now she’s hoping to reach a donor who will do the same for her. Gass-Bronstein has been told she will spend “years and years” on the transplant waiting list and undergoing dialysis unless she can connect with a living donor. She recognizes it’s a big ask. To find someone who is willing to do it would be an indescribable gift.

“I’m trying to spread the word of my need for a kidney transplant in hopes of finding an altruistic donor to donate an organ for me. Altruistic means the person who would do it out of the kindness of their heart, just to help a stranger to survive,” Gass-Bronstein explained. “I’m still very hopeful. I’m very hopeful that I will find somebody.”

While Gass-Bronstein acknowledges the transplant sounds “drastic,” she knows firsthand from her experience as a nurse that it’s a “very established procedure.” She has also spoken to several donors and recipients who have been able to continue their lives with little disruption after a few weeks of recovery.

Ultimately, that’s all Gass-Bronstein wants: to enjoy her life and retirement the way she planned it. She shared that she had been “dreaming about doing lots of volunteer work” in the St. Louis and Metro East communities by utilizing her nursing skills. She hopes to do exactly that as soon as she can, after receiving the transplant.

“Several people have approached me during my search, sharing their own donor experience with me, and they are willing to give a testimony for people who would like to do it — but have doubts and reasonable fear — on how smoothly it was in their lives and how they were able to save human life, essentially, without any harm to their own

body,” she said. “There are plenty of people who are alive and well after , and they live and enjoy life and continue to spend time with our families and give back to society, which I’m very willing to do.”



Gass-Bronstein is “the glue that holds our family together,” said her husband. The two of them launched her search for a donor on an [official Facebook page, called “Kidney Donor Needed for Yelena.”](#) with the help of their daughter. All of the family members post on the page, reminding followers that Gass-Bronstein isn’t just a patient; she’s a mother, wife, nurse, animal lover, her husband’s “soulmate.”

“My greatest wish is to continue to have many more days with the love of my life,” her husband wrote in an emotional plea on [the Facebook page](#).

Gass-Bronstein’s blood type is A+, but Barnes-Jewish Hospital has a program that will match a donor to a corresponding recipient. Your intended recipient might not receive

your kidney, but through your donation, they will receive a kidney from a donor who matches their blood type. This means anyone can donate to help Gass-Bronstein, regardless of blood type. You can [read more about the kidney donor matching program here](#).

Until she finds a donor, Gass-Bronstein is doing everything she can to prepare. She has already been evaluated, so she can receive the transplant as soon as it's available.

And even though she is experiencing these health challenges, Gass-Bronstein is still showing the altruism that guided her through her 26-year nursing career. She is focused on spreading the word about organ donation and how the decision to become a donor can help so many people. By sharing her story, she hopes she can find a living donor while also encouraging people to sign up on the donor registry, which saves lives every day.

“It's not very easy to ask people for help, especially when I'm more accustomed to helping people myself,” Gass-Bronstein admitted. “But I'm fighting for my life, essentially, and to bring awareness to organ donation. It's not just my life; there are lots of people who are in the same situation. And I think that bringing awareness in general to the public is extremely, extremely important, because more and more people are getting on these waiting lists. The waiting list becomes longer and longer and longer. That's why I'm doing everything I can possibly do to find somebody.”

To find out more about becoming a donor, or if you think you could be a match for Yelena Gass-Bronstein, contact her at kidney4yelena@yahoo.com or “[Kidney Donor Needed for Yelena](#)” on Facebook. For more information about the kidney donation process, visit the [kidney transplant webpage](#) at [Barnes-Jewish Hospital's official website](#).

YELENA NEEDS A KIDNEY



Hello! My name is Yelena Gass-Bronstein.

I have End-Stage Kidney Disease, and I am in desperate need of a kidney.

I devoted my entire professional life to working as a Registered Nurse in the hospital setting, including serving in the front-line during COVID. I feel honored to have been able to help so many people through some of their most difficult times.

Now I need help myself. I am listed at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, MO. My blood type is A+, but it is not necessary for the donor to have the same/compatible blood type!

Barnes Hospital offers a "Paired Kidney Exchange" program, which means that if my donor's blood type isn't compatible with mine, they will swap two living donors, so that I will receive the most compatible kidney.

I am begging for a second chance at LIFE, to stay ALIVE!

It takes an extraordinarily special person to save another person's life!

**Please consider being my kidney donor
and giving me the GIFT OF LIFE!**

**Please email me if you have any questions
or are considering being a donor:**

kidney4yelena@yahoo.com

Transplant Center: 314-362-5365, Option 4

Please ask to speak to the Living Donor Coordinator.