

Kennedy's Story

May 31, 2019

Grateful Kidney Transplant Recipient Starts Her Own Non-Profit to Help Kids

Kennedy Carter of Mayville, Michigan, knows a thing or two about being in the hospital. After complaints of feeling weak and anemic in 2008, doctors at DMC Children's Hospital of Michigan determined she had microscopic polyangiitis (MPA), a disorder causing blood vessel inflammation which can lead to organ damage.

In Kennedy's case, the disorder affected her kidneys which caused them to fail. Rudolph Valentini, MD, Chief Medical Officer at the Children's Hospital of Michigan, says Kennedy was courageous throughout the early months of her kidney failure. "She had to accept the fact that her kidneys could not be returned to normal function due to the advanced MPA. As such, she would need hemodialysis at the Children's Hospital of Michigan three days per week for several months."

Kennedy's mom, Stacy, says she was forced to miss many days of school and was in the hospital for more than 90 days. Once her disease stabilized, Kennedy was changed to home peritoneal dialysis which allowed her to spend more time at home and reduce her school absences. Although dialysis could continue for some time, her best hope was for a kidney transplant.

Fortunately for Kennedy, a match was found after only a few months and in October of 2010, she received her lifesaving kidney transplant.

Since her transplant she has not been admitted to the hospital and only goes in for routine care.

She is back at school, on the cheerleading squad and participates in the Imagine Photo Club, a program at the Children's Hospital of Michigan designed to help patients tell their own story through photographic images.

Fortunately, Kennedy is spending fewer days as a patient and more time helping other kids at the hospital.

Kennedy has started a non-profit organization called Kids Just Care (KJC). This charity, whose initials match those of Kennedy, aims to raise money and provide toys for kids at the hospital. She has made bracelets and raised more than \$1,000 her first year. Her hope is to double that amount this year.

Kennedy's mother Stacy says with great emotion, her family will never forget the generosity of the donor family. "We recently learned the donor was a 33-year-old mother of three. As a parent, I cannot imagine having to make that selfless act. Words can never express the gratitude we have.

UM-Flint student continues to set example for others after her death

By **MARTHA PENNINGTON** (<https://news.umflint.edu/author/mkpennin/>). On November 2, 2022 11:33 am



UM-Flint Health Care Administration major Kennedy Carter (left) organized toy drives for Children's Hospital of Michigan. Her family is continuing the tradition after her death.

Kennedy Carter was determined to live her life to the fullest. The University of Michigan-Flint health care administration major from Mayville dealt with many health challenges but never let that stop her from spreading joy to others.

Carter, 26, who died in March, just weeks before graduating, was awarded a posthumous degree in honor of her dedication and tenacity. Carter's mom, Stacy Windham, hopes that others will live by her example.

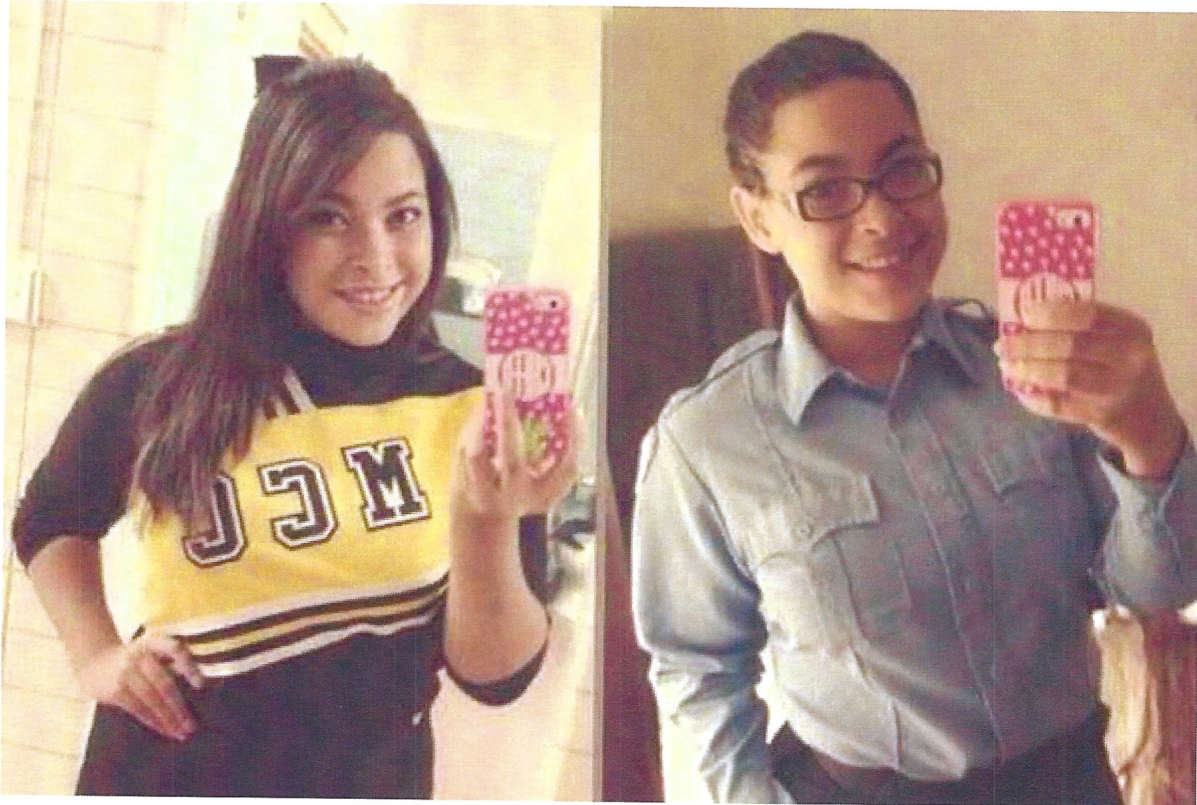
Her family is currently collecting toys for Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit in order to make a donation for patients this Christmas in Kennedy's name, a tradition that she started as a teenager.

"She worked so hard through so much adversity," Windham said. "It doesn't matter what your circumstances are. You can still make lemonade. I think that most people would have had no idea that Kennedy struggled with health issues. That was intentional. She made a conscious choice to have a positive attitude and do things for other people."

Carter was diagnosed with end-stage renal disease at 13. She was in and out of the hospital and had a kidney transplant. Her mom says she went through the experience with strength and positivity beyond her years.

She was comforted by the nurses and health care workers that cared for her and wanted to provide the same comfort to other sick children. She started collecting toys at Christmas each year for other patients. After high school, she was a cheerleader at Mott Community College and organized toy drives during basketball games.

Carter also aspired to work in health care and make a difference for others. She went through EMT training and worked as a volunteer first responder in Mayville. While her health wouldn't allow her to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse, she graduated with an associate's degree in science from Mott Community College and then transferred to UM-Flint for the online health care administration degree.



Kennedy Carter was a cheerleader at Mott Community College and a volunteer EMT.

"Kennedy was one of the outstanding students in my classes and proved her mastery of all the content we covered," said Reza Amini, UM-Flint associate professor of public health and health care administration program coordinator. "She was a brilliant and diligent student who demonstrated a

sense of responsibility towards her academic achievement and her peers."

Carter's dad, Anthony Carter, is a big University of Michigan football fan. Her parents were recently able to attend a U-M football game in Ann Arbor with Amini and cheer in Kennedy's memory.

"I know she was whooping it up," Windham said. "I stood up and yelled at the top of my lungs on her behalf."

Windham says her daughter was working on a book about her experiences and that she hopes to finish it in her honor. She also hopes that others will choose to live a life of purpose and joy, just as her daughter, whose middle name was Joy, was able to do.

"I want people to overlook what isn't great in their own backyard and help someone with the flowers on their side of the fence," Windham said. "Life is about finding joy. Kennedy took that seriously and she would want others to as well. She was such a shining light."

Those interested in participating in the Children's Hospital of Michigan toy drive can email Windham at windows2thepast@yahoo.com.

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TUSCOLA COUNTY

Mother continues toy drive in daughter's memory



Stacy Windham, right, is restarting a tradition begun by her daughter Kennedy Carter, left, in 2009, when Kennedy was 14. Windham is collecting toys to donate to Children's Hospital in Detroit to be dispersed to patients. Carter, a Mayville High School graduate, died in March after a lengthy illness.

BY JOHN SCHNEIDER | Reporter
john@tcadvertiser.com

MAYVILLE — Kennedy Joy Carter was just 14 when she decided that actions, and not words, were the key to making others happy.

In June of 2009, during a long stay at the Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit, Carter founded Kids Just Care (which begins with the same first letters of her name), a nonprofit foundation to collect items for the hospital's young patients — especially at Christmastime.

On March 12, Carter — a Mayville High School graduate and daughter of Stacy and Tony Windham — died at age 26 after battling many serious illnesses for

most of her life.

Stacy Windham, of Mayville, is carrying on her daughter's legacy in the first Christmas since her death.

Windham is collecting children's items — especially toys — until Dec. 5, at which time they will be donated to the Children's Hospital. Toys of interest are: stuffed animals, dolls, trucks and cars, action figures, character collectibles, arts and crafts kits, fidget spinners, board games, puzzles and Legos.

Gift cards, electronic devices and monetary donations are also welcome.

Windham works in Caro, and would be willing to pick up the toys. To donate, email windows2thepast@yahoo.com or call Windham at 989-660-0190.

The toys will be delivered to Children's Hospital by Dec. 9, so Dec. 5 is a soft deadline.

Carter was admitted to Children's Hospital in December of 2008 after being diagnosed with

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TUSCOLA COUNTY

Mother continues toy drive in daughter's memory

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kidney failure and would struggle with a plethora of health issues for the remainder of her life. She was the recipient of a kidney transplant in October 2010. She was also diagnosed with a rare autoimmune condition.

Throughout her childhood, Carter was in and out of hospitals, undergoing several operations and procedures. Carter was enmeshed by the Children's Hospital's "Snow Day" event, which provided toys to patients during the holidays.

And she felt the need to help out.

"She wanted to bring toys, and as the mom of a determined teenager, I wanted to help," Stacy Windham said.

So Carter took the initiative to gather items and ask the community for donations. It was a mother-daughter project that lasted until Carter's sophomore year of college.

"Life had gotten busy, so she had to put it aside," Windham said.

This year, the time was right to restart the tradition.

"I was trying to figure out how to fill in some of the gaps of the loss," Windham said. "I thought this would be a great way

to honor her."

Carter's health didn't deter the 2013 Mayville High School graduate from living life to the fullest. After graduation, Carter attended Mott Community College, where she was a cheerleader, and earned an associate's degree in science. She transferred to the University of Michigan-Flint, where she was in her final semester and just weeks away from graduating at the time of her death. She was pursuing an online health-care administration degree.

"She was a cheerleader and a student and she didn't want to be known as a sick person, but just as a person," Windham said.

"When life gave her lemons, she figured out how to make lemonade. And she really, really, really enjoyed giving back."

While spending weeks at a time in the hospital, Carter paid attention to similar young patients, and how they reacted to the situation.

"We were in the health-care system for a long time, and saw a lot of kids who struggle with chronic illness," Windham said. "And a lot of them didn't respond well. So Kennedy decided very early that she was going to be positive and try to make things better for others."

TUSCOLA COUNTY

Police: Burglars reportedly stole \$70,351 of power tools

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discovered someone had broken into the store's back entrance.

The same three suspects are accused in the Gladwin County burglary of a party store in August 2020. In that case, Jacklin was sentenced in September of this year to four to 20 years in prison after pleading guilty to breaking and entering a building with intent to commit larceny, and possession of a firearm while committing or attempting to commit a felony (felony firearm).

Tuscola County Prosecutor Mark E. Reese in April credited a joint effort between authorities that led to the identification of the trio.

"This is a case where there was a good piece of investigating done by the (Tuscola County) Sheriff's Office in conjunction with the Midland and Gladwin county sheriff's offices ... putting this together piece by piece and figuring out who was involved," Reese said.

Jacklin was originally charged in Tuscola County, in connection with the Vassar Building Center incident, with breaking and entering a building with intent to commit larceny, conspiracy to commit breaking and entering a building with

intent to commit larceny, possession of a firearm by a felon, larceny in a building, and four counts of felony firearm.

The two breaking-and-entering counts are the most serious, each carrying a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.

On July 11 in Tuscola County, Jacklin pleaded guilty to the conspiracy count and to possession of a firearm by a felon. The rest of the counts were dismissed.

Jacklin pleaded as a habitual offender in both the Gladwin County and Tuscola County cases.

Jacklin's rap sheet includes convictions for multiple larcenies and break-ins, as well as retail fraud, home invasion and drug charges. He has been convicted of crimes in multiple counties, including Tuscola, Gladwin, Saginaw, Isosco, Ogemaw, Wexford and Montcalm counties, according to his Tuscola County case file.

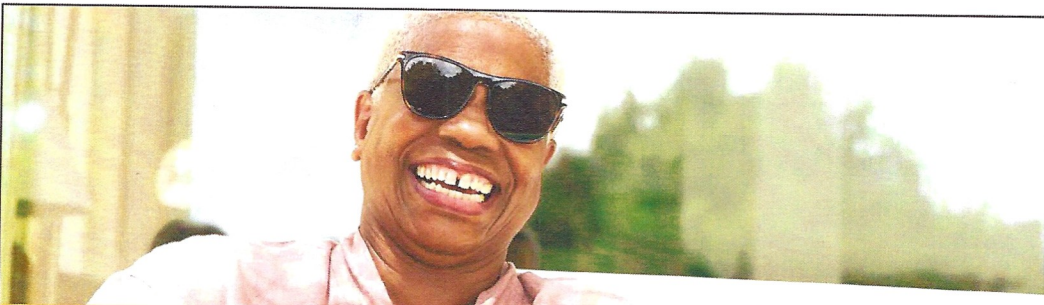
Jacklin was defended in Tuscola County by Sebawaing attorney Jill Schmidt.

Wilhite, 27, was arraigned in April in Tuscola County on charges of breaking and entering a building with intent to commit larceny, and conspiracy to break and enter a building with intent to commit larceny in a building — a four-year felony. The case is pending.

Wilhite is housed at the Macon



Correctional Facility in Lenox Township. He was sentenced to three to 20 years in prison in connection with the Gladwin County incident after pleading no contest to breaking and entering a building with intent to commit larceny, and larceny in a building.



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