

# Seattle Post-Intelligencer

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PAUL JOSEPH BROWN / P-I

Annamarie Ausnes, left, greets barista Sandie Andersen with a rose on Andersen's arrival at Virginia Mason Medical Center for the kidney transplant surgery Tuesday. All went fine. "If you can save somebody's life, it's special," said Jeffrey Andersen, Sandie's husband.

## Starbucks barista donates kidney to one of her regulars

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By **CHERIE BLACK**

P-I REPORTER

Annamarie Ausnes had been visiting her local Starbucks for coffee and small talk with the barista for three years. During their conversations, they talked about almost everything, but Ausnes never once mentioned her failing health.

Ausnes, 55, who works at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, has known about her polycystic kidney disease for nearly 20 years. The genetic disorder causes numerous cysts in the kidney and eventual kidney failure. When her health suddenly began to decline and her kidneys were functioning at only 15 percent, she knew she needed a transplant.

Had her kidney function deteriorated to 12 percent, she would have faced painful dialysis treatments and possible death. Her only option was a transplant. Her husband and son weren't matches. She was facing a long wait on a transplant list.

One day last fall, she mentioned to Sandie Andersen -- the barista she casually knew through her morning caffeine runs -- that her kidneys were shutting down. Andersen, 51, didn't hesitate. She had a blood test to see if she matched her customer. She did.

Tuesday morning, Andersen donated a kidney to Ausnes at Virginia Mason Medical Center. Now, Ausnes has three kidneys. Surgeons said that unlike a heart transplant, her old kidneys "didn't interfere" with the transplant and she had room for the new one to fit.

After what surgeons called a successful surgery, both women face a few days in the hospital, and weeks of recovery, but are expected to be fine, surgeons said.

Their husbands and family members gathered at the hospital Tuesday afternoon, relieved the ordeal was over and thankful their wives found each other.

"I have felt all along something special was going to happen for my wife," said John Ausnes. "She's a special person and she ran into a special person. We've been married for 30 years, and this was my opportunity to be a supportive husband."

Jeffrey Andersen said his wife was groggy when he visited her immediately after surgery, and admired her selflessness at wanting to help a casual acquaintance.

"If you can save somebody's life, it's special," Andersen said. "It's what Sandi wanted to do."

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