



## Debra Callaway & Lewis Merrill

(living donor & recipient)

Organ donated/received: Kidney

**Their Story:** On vacation in 2003, Debra Callaway sat curled up reading her *New Yorker* magazine. She read of a man who donated his kidney and learned about the alarming number of people on the donor waiting list. Debra decided to donate in hopes of changing someone's life for the better.

The same year Debra decided to donate, 29 year-old Lewis Merrill received alarming news that would change the course of his life. His doctor informed him he had systemic lupus erythematosus, which came as a shock at such a young age. Lewis had a young family and a full life ahead. Surviving on dialysis, his lowest point came in 2005 when he found out his kidneys were functioning at a dangerous rate of just two percent. He was in desperate need of a kidney transplant.

These two strangers were matched together in the fall of 2006. After a few setbacks, Lewis successfully received Debra's kidney in December. "I thought, wow, it finally happened. Somewhere in this hospital a man has my kidney. He and his family's lives will change for the better," Debra says of the experience. It wouldn't be until nine months later that Lewis would get to personally thank Debra for her heroic gift. To this day, they share an indescribable bond that can only be achieved through the organ donation process.