

## SURETHA MAARTENS

My name is Suretha Maartens and I'm 26 years old. I received a kidney transplant in 2011 at the age of 23. My mother was the donor. I've had the privilege to have my kidney now for a little over 2 years now.

I participate in the sprints (100m and 200m) as well as Long Jump. I've done these sports at school, so luckily it is familiar.

My first games was the National Transplant Games in 2012 where I came first in my age group in all events I participated in (100m, Long Jump and ball throw). I also broke 2 SA records (100m and Long Jump) and broke the World Record in the 100m.



I am a born Free State girl, raised on farm in the Eastern Free State. I am the middle child of three daughters. I've always been a healthy person, loved exercise and eating healthy. When I was diagnosed in 2010, 15 September, it came as a shock to me and my whole family. I was a teacher at that time. I started on Peritoneal Dialysis in December 2010 and received my mom's kidney the following January. Before the transplant I played hockey occasionally, but loved running long distances and doing outside activities. Hiking, horseback riding, etc.

I had no history of illness at all. Like any girl growing up on a farm there was the occasional broken arm, tooth or toe, but good health was in our family's favor.

The lead up to the surgery was very short and in a way not terrifying at all. The person I was scared for was my mom and the rest of my loved ones. I've been blessed with a fighting spirit and was raised that way to. So fear was replaced with curiosity and excitement, for nothing could be worse than dialysis. God blessed us with a sense of peace for His hand guided us the whole way. I had magnificent doctors, in their profession and in their being.

My donor, my mom, is an exceptional woman. 4 days after I was diagnosed, we lost her mother to old age and illness, and she continued un-shaken in her faith and motherly duties. She is still like a steam train, unstoppable in her work as a music teacher and in her community. Except for the few restraints that we as post transplant patients have, like living a little cautious to bumps, etc., my life has changed in view more than in practice. I view life as a child again, grabbing opportunities and seeing things for the miracles they are. Appreciating the people in my life and changes I'm given.

I'm blessed to have only little fears, like the fact that I may need another transplant sooner than we would want. As far as dreams and goals go, I would love to see the world realise how many lives can be saved by organ donation! I hope my story can touch lives enough to make them take the steps in becoming donors. Goals for the WTG 2013: I would love to add 2 more World Records to my list and glorify God, whose miracle I am, in this way.

These games has made me realise that nothing can bring you down if you have a fighting will. And to share something so big with people whose been through things that you have been through, brings a sense of unity that your loved ones or friends unfortunately can't give or understand. It gives you that strive and drive to work harder and become the optimal You to come together with these people again in a year's time.

Miracles do exist\*