A Second Chance—and a Heart Overflowing with Gratitude

November is a month for giving thanks, but gratitude has become part of every day for me. I am here because of the paramedics, Life Flight team, nurses, and doctors who saved my life on November 15, 2023. Their skill, compassion, and determination gave me a second chance that I never take for granted.

That day, I bent over while working in my yard. When I stood up, it felt as though my head had exploded, and I saw fireworks in my eyes. I yelled to my husband, "Call 911—I have a brain aneurysm, and it ruptured." I still do not know what made me say those words, because no one had ever told me I had an aneurysm. Somehow, in that terrifying moment, I knew I needed help—and help came.

During the ambulance ride, I could think only of my family, friends, and PIX sisters. I feared I would never see them again. There was still so much I wanted to see, say, and do. Deep within me was a fierce certainty: this could not be the end of my story.

After several days in the ICU, I woke to learn that a large brain aneurysm had ruptured, causing a stroke and some heart damage. My doctor told me it was a true miracle that I was still alive. From that moment forward, I began to see each new day for what it truly is—a gift.

I spent 25 days in the Neuro ICU, determined not to waste this second chance. When I was released, I was told that I might not be able to do everything I once did—and that was okay. Healing taught me that strength is not measured by doing everything perfectly. Sometimes, strength is simply choosing hope, taking the next step, and being grateful to be here.

The Strength of Our Chapter and Sisterhood

My experience also reminds me how thankful we should be for our chapter and our sisters. As in any family, chapters experience struggles and disagreements. We will not always see things the same way or choose the same path, but our differences can become a source of strength when we listen with respect, lead with kindness, and remember what unites us.

Growth begins when we have the courage to try something new. Rules have their place, but they should never keep us from recognizing an opportunity to serve, support someone in need, or welcome a fresh idea. One person's voice, one new leader, or one act of compassion can inspire an entire chapter.

How We Can Help Our Sisterhood Thrive

- Listen to every member with an open heart; each sister's voice matters.
- Give someone new the opportunity to lead a fundraiser or project—and encourage her along the way.
- Welcome fresh ideas with courage, curiosity, and a willingness to learn together.
- Keep our shared purpose at the center of all we do: lifting up those who are less fortunate.

Every Day Is a Gift

Life is too short not to cherish what we have and the people who walk beside us. My second chance has taught me that even an imperfect life can be filled with extraordinary purpose, joy, and love. I am deeply thankful for every new day—and for all my PIX sisters, whose friendship and sisterhood remind me that none of us walks this journey alone.

Loyally,

Sandie Carlson
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