

# Siblings Mark Hendra and Tanya Bothma share their organ and tissue donation journey

**Julie Purkis**  
Public Relations Assistant  
Centre for Tissue Engineering  
Tshwane University of Technology  
Tshwane



**W**e first came into contact with Tanya Bothma, a petite blonde, while gathering information for the tissue donor story on her brother, Centurion-based Mark Hendra (36). Mark a dynamic, vibrant young man tragically lost his life when his powered paraglider spiralled out of control one Sunday afternoon early in July 2017 at Sunderland Ridge, Centurion. Mark, IT businessman and flying enthusiast, was described by his brother-in-law Schalk Bothma as an adventurous soul with a big heart for his family, animals, children and the environment, and was somebody who committed fully to any project or hobby. "He loved living his life and didn't hold back on anything." Although Mark was not married and had no children of his own, he was very family-orientated and never missed a family celebration or birthday. Devastated, the family battled to come to terms with his death; especially Tanya. The siblings had been close, not only in age, but because Mark had always been on hand to offer comfort and reassurance to his sister, diagnosed at a very early age with chronic lung disease and bronchiolitis obliterans. But, based on the fact that Mark was a registered organ donor already, the Hendra family had absolutely no hesitation in agreeing to donate some of his tissue for transplant purposes. Despite their overwhelming grief and loss, it was a privilege for them to consider helping someone else in need. Having been privileged to tell Mark's story, we requested final comment from his mother, Sr Judy Hendra. Judy informed us that Tanya had since been placed on the 'active' lung transplant list with the Division of Pulmonology, Groote Schuur Hospital subsequent to Mark's accident.

We later learned that Tanya had received the call alerting her to a lung donor who was a suitable match in early December. Tanya was immediately admitted to theatre and following a seven-hour procedure her family were relieved to hear that her 'new' lungs were working, she was no longer on mechanical support and the medical team were busy closing her chest...! From there Tanya was transferred to the intensive care unit where the surgical team reassured her family that the procedure had gone as well as could be expected but that the following 12 hours would be critical. Tanya remained in ICU where she was closely monitored. The family were advised to expect the following three months to be eventful with many ups and downs. The Hendra and Bothma family's text message read (with kind permission Judy Hendra):

*"It (the lung transplant procedure) is an incredible event in our lives and we will live by His Will and trust that from here it goes as well as the operation itself. Thanks to everyone for your prayers and words of strength and love. We are all very tired but*

*grateful and at peace... At this time particularly, we salute and give thanks for each and every donor family, for their courage in agreeing to honour and respect their loved one's wishes, especially in the midst of their grief and pain. You can be so very proud of your loved one, and the legacy of love that they have left behind. The ultimate gift to another".*

Tanya Bothma is the first person to receive a double lung transplant in Cape Town, and what makes this so unique and special is that Groote Schuur is the first hospital within the state sector nationally to perform a bilateral sequential lung transplant. This type of procedure is available in Gauteng, at a private hospital to patients on medical aid.



Above: The Hendra and Bothma families. Left: Tanya Bothma (organ recipient) and Mark Hendra (tissue donor) 2017

Since her procedure, Tanya has faced a number of challenges – a heart flutter necessitating a stay in ICU, medication, a fungal infection in the lungs requiring another hospital stay, more medication to control the continuous nausea that makes it difficult for her to eat and gain the necessary weight. But...Tanya has normal lung function for the first time in her life and has increased her lung capacity from 400ml of air to 2L of air flow; she is doing exercises with her pulmonary rehab that she could only dream about doing before! There are still challenges ahead but Tanya is especially and eternally grateful for the donor, and so painfully aware of the pain and grief experienced by the family and friends of the donor since she has experienced both sides of this incredible process called organ donation.

*"And finally, we trust in God and believe that His hand is in all of this, and one day we will understand why this amazing gift to one and at the same the tremendous pain for another, goes hand in hand. We urge you to consider becoming a donor, and of leaving a legacy of your own. Thank you".*

The Hendra & Bothma families.