

A Heart Full of Gratitude

(Music)

A year ago, Sarah Kalbus' heart was failing.

She couldn't walk a city block.

Randy Kalbus/Sarah's Husband: We were in such a state of dismay at how rapid her health was declining. And we were in and out of the emergency room and the hospital for weeks at a time.

Today, she walks a 3-mile Heart Walk in honor of the heart transplant she received this spring and the caregivers who saved her life.

Sarah Kalbus/Heart Transplant Recipient: I feel good. And that's such a simple statement, but when you've had it taken away and you get it back. I mean, I'm good. I'm really good.

In January, Sarah's physician at Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara diagnosed her with a rare condition.

Christopher Woo, MD/Kaiser Permanente Advanced Heart Failure Cardiologist: Sarah has a condition called cardiac sarcoidosis, which is a poorly understood auto-immune condition where the body's immune system or white blood cells attack our own organs. In her case, they affected her heart and led to dangerous heart rhythms as well as weakened her heart muscle.

Her Kaiser Permanente care team prepared her for a heart transplant.

Christopher Woo, MD: So, it's working beautifully.

On May 1, Sarah had a successful transplant at Stanford Medical Center, a longtime partner of Kaiser Permanente's transplant program. After recovering, she returned to the care of her Kaiser Permanente team.

Sarah Kalbus: It's such an amazing gift, and it's this... That heartbeat inside of me is the culmination of so much skill and so much goodness.

So, Sarah and her husband walk in gratitude.

Sarah Kalbus: I am here today largely to acknowledge the people that have taken care of me. Every nurse, and PA, and physician, and surgeon. Those are the folks that really are exceptional.

Randy Kalbus: If we hadn't been with this group, I don't think she'd be here today. She would've passed away. And I can't thank them enough for all they've done for Sarah.