

Living Donor Exemplifies Healthy Lifestyle & Life After Donation



Bernice Taylor has always been intrigued by fitness, but the former chemist may have never imagined becoming the health influencer she is today with over hundreds of thousands of followers. She also could have never anticipated the life events that continue to shape her career and impact others.

It began in 2015, when her oldest sister KuKuwa's daughter, Samantha, was diagnosed with lupus nephritis. Both of her niece's kidneys went down and she went on dialysis. Samantha began in-center hemodialysis but eventually moved to peritoneal dialysis at home.

While praying for Samantha and offering emotional support to her niece and sister, Bernice was working full time as a chemist and had also taken on a caregiver role for her mother-in-law who was in poor health. Subsequently, Bernice found her own health declining. Suffering from A-fib and SVT (supraventricular tachycardia) she underwent a catheter ablation, a procedure that guides a tube into the heart to destroy small areas of tissue that may be causing an abnormal heartbeat. This procedure took place in 2011, and had

lingering effects for some years. These unforeseen complications left Bernice with a longer recuperation, but in the spring of 2016, the same year her mother-in-law passed, she started to get back in shape.

Later that same year, on a visit to Virginia to visit her niece, Bernice was blown away when she saw all the boxes of dialysis supplies and recalls experiencing the "pricking of the spirit". Bernice explained, "We are a praying family and the Holy Spirit convicted me – how am I praying and haven't been tested?" Upon returning home to Missouri, Bernice began the testing and decision process of becoming a living donor for her niece. During this time, Bernice drew strength from her "confidantes"; her husband of 33 years, Roger Taylor, and her younger sister, Margaret Billingsley, who is only 17 months younger than Bernice, but who she affectionately refers to as her twin and best friend. When she officially found out she was a match, her three children, Stephen, Jonathan, and Tiffany were frightened by the risks. Bernice eventually wrote about their reactions in a book entitled, *Decisions Women Face and Make: True Stories of Decisions, Provision, and Vision* that she published in 2022.



Bernice and Samantha's supportive family with hubby, Roger, taking the picture.



Bernice before surgery.

After informing her sister and niece that she was a match, the surgeries were scheduled to take place in Virginia on December 16, 2016. However, Bernice caught RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) on the plane ride and had to recover before the surgery could take place. She then recuperated in Virginia for a few weeks with her son Jonathan who had traveled with his mother and had gotten a job and an apartment there.

After returning home, Bernice went back to work and even added advocacy to her list, volunteering for the National Kidney Foundation hosting an online room, "Living Donor & Transplant Club". She says this experience provided her even more education on organ donation and transplantation.

In 2019, still successfully maintaining her fitness and health routines, Bernice started her 50 somethingoriginal.com website as a side hustle to help others age 50 and over live a healthy lifestyle. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Bernice quit her job as a chemist and finding herself home more often, she escalated her health and fitness rou-



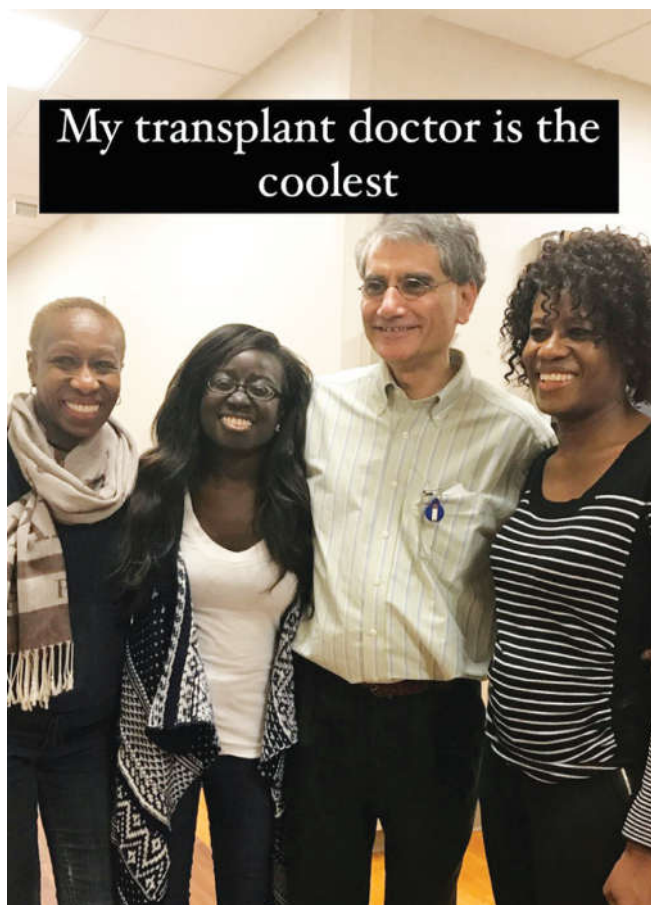
Bernice's 3 children: Jonathan, Tiffany, and Stephen who drove 18 hours to see his mother only to return the next day. He had to see his mother even though the timing wasn't good for him.

tine and as another side hustle, began taking on social media clients. This led to combining fitness and healthy eating with social media for herself, and ultimately led her to rebranding her work as Bernice Taylor Fitness.

Bernice has her own On Demand platform, Healthynista Community where individuals can purchase a monthly or yearly subscription. Videos, fitness classes and livestreams offer indoor walking, low impact high-intensity interval training videos with modifications, recipes, quotes, strength training etc. Bernice also wrote another book, *31 Days to a Healthy Lifestyle: A Commonsense Guide to*



Samantha and Bernice.



Bernice with sister Kukuwa, her niece Samantha, and the Nephrologist on the transplant team at INOVA, Dr Wali.



Kukuwa, Tiffany, Bernice's brother-in-law, Randy, and Jonathan.



Bernice and her husband, Roger.

Weight Loss After 50, sold on Amazon. Bernice can be found on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Pinterest.

Bernice is ecstatic to help others achieve their health and fitness goals, but it runs deeper than that, "I love it. I absolutely love it! What gives me so much joy is that people see my modifications and are able to work out even if they cannot stand up to exercise. I always wanted to do fitness, but now I can share with others how it feels to recuperate and live life after donation." Bernice shares information on her living donor experience in her videos in hopes of inspiring others. "I like encouraging others that may want to be a donor, were a donor and need to get in better shape or need to get in better shape to receive an organ."

Website: <https://50somethingoriginal.com> ★