

## Donated liver saved Amanda

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Amanda Poch didn't start with a fair break in life.

The 29-year-old inherited a condition that made her body's immune system attack her liver.

At age 20, she was put on strong medication.

"The side-effects were harsh on me," Poch said yesterday. "I felt more sick on the medication than not."

She tried Chinese medicine and acupuncture in an attempt to get her back to normal, but to no avail.

Three years ago, she almost died. Poch had contracted cirrhosis of the liver and no medication could help.

With her liver function down to five per cent, she underwent an emergency liver transplant, which saved her life.

"I hadn't gone through the necessary procedures to get on the list [for a liver transplant]," she said.

"It came down to six hours, and I almost wouldn't be here.

"If the liver that was on its way wasn't compatible, I wouldn't have made it through the evening," she said.

Poch kept a positive attitude throughout her two-month recovery.

"I had to learn to feed myself. I had to learn to walk again," she said.

Today marks the 40th anniversary of the first organ transplant in B.C., a day being celebrated by Poch and many of the 4,500 other organ recipients.

Poch's job as development co-ordinator with the Vancouver branch of the Canadian Liver Foundation has given her the opportunity to work with other liver patients.

"It's been very rewarding for me," said Poch, who performs hours of volunteer work for B.C. Transplant and crews for the Gift of Life dragon boat team.

"I cherish everything more now," she said. "I have always lived my life to the fullest; however I'm more adamant about what I want. I'm more stubborn. I don't hesitate any more or procrastinate."

Poch is still searching for the family of the person whose death three years ago allowed her to live.

"I would really like to know who it was," she said.

B.C. Transplant gives recipients the opportunity to write thank-you letters to the donors or their survivors. Poch sent a letter to the family six months after receiving the new liver.

"I'll write another letter on the five-year anniversary," she said.

"For me it's really just about being able to say thank you -- and how do you really do that?"

B.C. Transplant is hosting its annual walk to raise awareness about organ transplants tomorrow at Second Beach in Stanley Park, beginning at 10 a.m. It's part of the World's Biggest Walk taking place that day on five continents.

#### B.C. MILESTONES

1968: First organ transplant in B.C.

1976: First live-donor kidney transplant.

1986: B.C. Transplant established.

1988: First heart-and-lung transplant.

1989: First liver transplant.

1996: B.C. Transplant Research Foundation operational.

2001: First live-donor liver transplant.

2007: 1,000th living-donor transplant performed in B.C. Canada's first robot-assisted living donor kidney surgery performed at VGH.

2008: B.C. Transplant introduces online, legally binding organ-donor consent registration system.

- To register as an organ donor: [www.transplant.bc.ca](http://www.transplant.bc.ca) or call 1-800-663-6189.