Transplant Mom Tianna Tells Their Story

Because Armaneigh's journey was so extensive and critical, the idea of actually returning home was rarely discussed during her hospital stay. Her condition was so fragile for so long being on the Berlin Heart, surviving multiple strokes, and ultimately receiving a heart transplant that the focus was always on just getting her stable and through the next step.

We knew that post-transplant care would be intense, but there was never a clear timeline or certainty about when we'd get to go home. It wasn't until much closer to her discharge, when things began to look more hopeful, that we started hearing from her care team about the requirement to stay close to the hospital for follow-up care.

At that point, we were just trying to hold it all together emotionally, and figuring out how we'd manage housing so far from home added a whole new layer of stress. Having support during that time made all the difference, because without it, we truly didn't have a solid plan for where we would go once we left the hospital.

At the very beginning, I took Armaneigh to the emergency room and she was admitted right away. Shortly after that, she was diagnosed with dilated cardiomyopathy. From that point on, everything changed. It was a situation we were suddenly forced into.

There was no going back home to prepare or plan. We were thrown into survival mode, and living in the hospital became our reality because she needed to be closely monitored and receive specialized care around the clock. Our lodging during that time was in the hospital itself for quite a while, and when we finally transitioned out of inpatient care, finding housing support like what Heartfelt Help Foundation (HHF) provide was crucial. We simply weren't in a position to afford extended stays near the hospital on our own.

Shortly before Armaneigh's transplant, my feelings around money, resources, and financial security were, honestly, filled with fear and uncertainty. We had already been in the hospital for so long, and I had to put everything on hold to be by her side: school, work, and any sense of normal life. Bills didn't stop just because we were living in a hospital room, and every day felt like a balancing act between her medical needs and trying to figure out how I was going to keep us afloat.

There were so many unexpected expenses: food, travel, supplies, and just trying to maintain some sense of stability while living away from home. I constantly worried about how I was going to afford everything she needed while making sure I was emotionally and physically present for her. It felt like we were running on empty in every way financially, emotionally, and mentally.

There's no real way to prepare for something like this, and as a single parent to a medically complex child, the pressure was overwhelming. I knew I had to be strong for Armaneigh, but behind the scenes, I was terrified of how we'd make it through.

We have government insurance, so while it, thankfully, covers the majority of Armaneigh's medical care, it does not provide any coverage for temporary recovery lodging. That part of our journey was entirely separate and something we had to figure out on our own, with the help of social workers and nonprofit organizations.

No one from our insurance team ever mentioned anything about lodging assistance, and we confirmed pretty early on through conversations with her hospital's social worker that housing support would not be covered. It was a tough realization, especially with how critical it was for us to stay close to the hospital after transplant.

HHF stepped in during a time when we truly had no other options. Without that help, we would've been left trying to piece together temporary housing on our own, which would've added even more stress to an already overwhelming situation.

The transplant center did offer a few resources to help with post-transplant recovery housing but not HHF, I heard about HHF from one of my heart mom friends, but the center's options were limited. They referred us to the Ronald McDonald House, which provided some lodging, but it wasn't a perfect fit for our needs. The space was shared, and while it was helpful to have somewhere to stay near the hospital, it didn't offer the privacy or comfort we truly needed, especially with Armaneigh's medical complexities.

We stayed for a while in the Ronald McDonald House, and there things were more challenging for us. It was a very different environment. The kitchen was shared, so I had to spend a lot more money eating out since I couldn't always prepare meals the way I needed to for Armaneigh. We also ended up spending most of our time cooped up in our room. There was no longer a private living room to relax in or a space where we could comfortably enjoy simple things like watching TV. Everything outside of our room was shared, and as a mom caring for a medically fragile child recovering from a heart transplant, that just didn't feel safe or comfortable. Not having a designated space that felt like "ours" added a lot of emotional stress; its shared space didn't really meet the unique needs of our healing journey.

The transplant center also provided financial aid referrals, but that was mainly for medical expenses, not housing. It was clear that we would need additional support to cover the costs of staying close to the hospital, and that's when HHF's assistance became so critical. Without their help, we would have been left trying to manage housing and travel expenses on our own, which would've added significant stress to an already challenging recovery process.

We did not have a post-transplant housing plan in place prior to hearing about HHF. Given the severity of Armaneigh's condition and the unpredictable nature of her medical journey, we were focused entirely on her immediate health needs, and housing was something we hadn't planned for until it became clear that we would need to stay close to the hospital after her transplant.

Before learning about HHF, our only option was to rely on whatever temporary lodging the hospital or social workers could help us find, but we didn't have any solid plan for where we would stay or how we would afford it. The financial burden of paying for a place near the hospital was something we hadn't even begun to address. When HHF stepped in, it was a huge relief, as they provided the support we desperately needed to ensure that we could stay close to the hospital without worrying about how we would manage housing costs.

If post-transplant housing had been our personal responsibility, I honestly don't know how we would've paid for it. With Armaneigh's medical expenses already piling up and being a single parent, there was no room in the budget for additional housing costs. I would've been forced to rely on family or friends to help us find a place to stay, but even that would have been a huge emotional and financial strain.

The reality is that I would've had to keep finding ways to make ends meet, whether it meant asking for financial help or trying to stretch whatever resources I had left. But the uncertainty and stress of not having a solid plan for housing on top of everything else would have been overwhelming. The support we received in the form of temporary lodging really made all the difference and allowed us to focus on Armaneigh's recovery rather than constantly worrying about where we'd be staying or how we'd afford it.

If post-transplant housing had been our personal responsibility, and we weren't able to stay at a shelter in Palo Alto close to Armaneigh's Heart Center, we would've been forced to return to Modesto and try to stay with a family member or friend. That would have meant traveling back and forth to Palo Alto (100 miles, often 3 hours) for all of her important follow-up appointments, lab work, and therapies.

Not only would that have been exhausting and emotionally draining, but it also would've put a huge strain on both her recovery and my ability to care for her properly. Long drives with a medically fragile child fresh out of transplant surgery would have been incredibly risky not to mention the added financial burden of gas, food, and the stress of not having a stable space to call our own.

Being able to stay near the hospital was truly critical for us. It gave us consistent access to care, reduced the pressure of daily travel, and allowed me to focus on Armaneigh's healing instead of constantly worrying about where we'd stay or how we'd get to her next appointment.

Traveling with a medically fragile child like Armaneigh especially right after transplant can be emotionally and physically draining. Every trip had to be carefully planned around her needs, her medications, and making sure she was comfortable and safe. Having a stable place to return to after those long medical days made all the difference.

The location was manageable and being within driving distance to Stanford gave us access to the care she needed without being overwhelmed by city traffic or long travel times, which we're grateful for.

HHF provided an apartment-style hotel that had many of the essentials we needed, and for that I'm so thankful. It was clean, private, and most importantly it felt safe, which gave me peace of mind as a mother caring for my medically fragile daughter, Armaneigh. After everything she had been through her heart transplant, multiple strokes, and a year in the hospital we needed a space where we could rest, reset, and focus on healing. This place gave us that.

The privacy especially made a difference. We weren't sharing common areas which meant less exposure to germs and more comfort for both of us. I could care for Armaneigh without the stress of being around unfamiliar people, which is so important for a child with a compromised immune system.

That said, while the space was a blessing, it didn't come fully equipped for our daily living needs. I had to purchase a lot of basic items to make it feel like home and to be able to prepare meals. So while it offered safety and comfort, there were still out-of-pocket costs that added financial strain during an already difficult time.

Still, the time we had there made a huge impact. It gave us a stable foundation to begin the next chapter of Armaneigh's recovery, and for that, I'll always be grateful.

While we're incredibly grateful for the lodging HHF provided, there were definitely some items and services that would have made our stay more supportive during recovery. The apartment-style hotel gave us a roof over our heads, which was a huge blessing but to truly make the space livable and feel like home, I had to provide a lot of essentials myself.

From kitchen items to basic household goods, I had to purchase things just to make it possible for us to cook meals and feel somewhat settled. On top of that, I still had to buy all of our food, and with Armaneigh's medical needs and my limited income, that added up quickly.

While the lodging covered the cost of the room, it didn't really allow us to save money the way you might think. We were still constantly spending to make sure we had what we

needed each day. It was helpful, but not fully sustainable during such a fragile time in our recovery.

When HHF stepped in and paid for our recovery lodging, it was about so much more than just covering a hotel bill, it was about restoring stability during one of the most vulnerable chapters of our lives. As a single mother caring for my medically complex daughter, Armaneigh, every day comes with emotional, physical, and financial challenges. She is a heart transplant recipient who spent over a year in the hospital, endured multiple strokes, and requires ongoing therapy and care.

Having a safe, clean, and nearby place to stay during her post-transplant recovery made a huge difference not only in her healing but in mine as well. Financially, it took a massive weight off my shoulders. I didn't have to choose between a roof over our heads and the medications or therapies she needed. Emotionally, it allowed me to be fully present for her without the constant anxiety of figuring out where we'd sleep that night or how I'd afford it.

It also meant I could maintain our routines therapy appointments, follow-up visits, and keeping her in a familiar environment which is so important for medically fragile children. Most importantly, it allowed me to focus on being her mom, her advocate, her comfort, and her strength, rather than just her caregiver trying to survive.

Thanks to HHF, our days were safer, more stable, and filled with more hope. They didn't just help us with lodging; they helped us continue our journey forward.

HHF provided us comfort and stability, truly helping us during a critical time.