

New York Mets

Schedule/results

Standings

Stats

Roster

MLB scores

Odds

Transactions

SPORTS / BASEBALL / **NEW YORK METS**

# How former Met Ed Hearn, a 1986 World Series champion, got a second chance at life from an Islip native



Former Met Ed Hearn poses with his wife Tricia during a celebration of the 40th anniversary of the 1986 World Series championship at the Cradle of Aviation Museum in Garden City on Thursday.

Credit: Rick Kopstein

By Ben Dickson  
[benjamin.dickson@newsday.com](mailto:benjamin.dickson@newsday.com) [X@bendickson\\_](#)  
Updated July 31, 2026 10:58 am

Ed Hearn knows the weekend ahead is a “celebration and thanksgiving for the blessings that I received as being a part of this ‘86 Mets team.”

But this means so much more than baseball.

“I got an angel from God [his wife, Tricia, a Lindenhurst native] to take care of me, and I got a woman who gave me part of her body so that I could be here doing this today,” the former Mets catcher told Newsday before Thursday night’s 40th anniversary celebration of the 1986 World Series champions at the Cradle of Aviation Museum in Garden City.



Ed Hearn pictured with the bobblehead of himself and Lisa Wolf, who donated a kidney that moved Ed to the top of the list for his fourth kidney transplant

That woman is Lisa Wolf, a 60-year-old Islip native who lives in Chesapeake, Virginia. Wolf is responsible for Hearn, who turns 66 on Aug. 23, receiving his fourth kidney transplant at the University of Minnesota in May 2023. They weren’t an exact match, though Wolf’s donation in Hearn’s name moved him to the top of the list through National Kidney Registry’s voucher program.

But their story began 37 years earlier. Hearn was catching in the bullpen at Shea Stadium when he saw a woman hanging over the railing and shouting his name. “This gal hollers down, ‘Hey, would you come have lunch with me and my sister up in Montreal next week?’ ” he said. “I was like, OK. So go to Montreal and hey, a free meal, right? So I met her in Montreal. They pull up to the motel in this little tiny car. I could barely fit in the darn thing.”

He added: “Forty years later, she saved my life with the gift of life.”

Hearn, who resides in Shawnee, Kansas, had his first kidney transplant in 1992. The third took place in 2002 and lasted 21 years before he needed a fourth.

Wolf, a big Mets fan, had been stalking Hearn on Facebook and read his posts about needing another replacement. She would promote them on her own Facebook page , telling people to get tested to see if they could be a match.

But each time Wolf posted, she felt a poke on her left side. It dawned upon her that she personally should get tested. After receiving permission from her husband, Jim Yates, who had a heart transplant in 2018, she did.



“I eventually realized it was God poking me,” she said Thursday in a phone interview while driving to New York. “They took my left kidney, and he was poking me in my left kidney saying basically, hey, this is the one that’s going to go.”

Wolf initially wanted to surprise Hearn with the news, but the first two places where she got tested lost her paperwork. She finally told him, and he recommended getting tested at Georgetown University.

“Well, I found out I wasn’t a match for him, which kind of devastated me for a day or so,” Wolf said. “And I said, let me call you back as soon as I could digest it. So I called them back. I said I’m going to donate anyway, but as long as it’s got Ed’s name on there and he gets to the top of the list, I’m fine . . .

“So I finished my workup, got my donation, and two weeks later, they called Ed telling him they had a match for him. At which point I burst out into tears at work because I was so excited for him.”

Wolf’s kidney actually went to a woman named Kelly in Wisconsin, and she was extremely touched that she could impact two lives at once.

Hearn and Wolf are supposed to have lunch Friday, a day before Saturday’s 40th anniversary celebration at Citi Field. It will be the first time Wolf meets Tricia — “I can’t wait to give her a big hug,” Wolf said — and the first time she has seen Ed in 40 years.

This time, Ed said: “It’s going to be I owe you.”

In addition to the kidney transplants, Hearn has had more than 100 surgeries for skin cancer and squamous cell carcinoma. He lost his left ear and part of the left side of his face (he currently is cancer-free). He’s been taking about 50 pills per day for about 35 years. And in October 2024, he was in the hospital for 100 days and went into cardiac arrest three times in one night.

“One night we were sitting there watching the damn Yankees,” he said. “Why are we doing that? I don’t know. And of course, I had cardiac arrest.”

Said Tricia: “Twenty-four hours later, he was sitting up in bed eating a turkey sandwich like it never happened . . . I’ve never seen anybody as strong and persevere through as much as he did. It’s just unbelievable.

“Even the doctor walked in. He said, ‘Wait a minute. Didn’t I run a code on you last night?’ ”

Tricia, a registered nurse for 44 years, has been by Ed’s side throughout.

Without her?

“I wouldn’t be alive,” Ed said.

Sure, the World Series ring is nice. But 1986 has come to mean a heck of a lot more than Hearn would ever imagine.

“I’m here today for a reason, and maybe the reason is to share this with you and so many other people,” he said. “It’s about encouragement when people are going through tough times. It’s about that we can make a difference and we can donate kidneys for these things and make a difference.

“Baseball’s just a storyline.”



Former Mets players Ed Hearn, left, and Darryl Strawberry greet each other during a 40th anniversary celebration of the 1986 World Series championship at the Cradle of Aviation Museum on Thursday in Garden City. Credit: Rick Kopstein



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[benjamin.dickson@newsday.com](mailto:benjamin.dickson@newsday.com) [X@bendickson\\_](#)

Ben Dickson is Newsday Sports' general assignment reporter. He joined Newsday's high school sports staff in 2023 after graduating from Maryland, where he covered several of the Terrapins' teams.