Your Life, Your Choice

A Sampling of Stories from Kidney Transplant Patients and Donors

A sampling of transplant stories for use in the ESRD NCC Peer Mentorship Training Program

Developed through collaboration of ESRD Patients, Transplant Donors, ESRD Networks, and the ESRD National Coordinating Center.
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This booklet contains real-life stories of kidney transplant recipients and donors, as told in their own words.

The stories were created as a way to share positive perspectives on kidney transplant as a treatment choice. They are designed to motivate and empower kidney patients, their families, and care partners to explore all treatment choices, including kidney transplant.

The booklet does not provide medical advice or information, but rather a first-hand narrative from the patient's perspective.

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Compiled and produced by the End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) National Coordinating Center (NCC), in collaboration with participating ESRD Networks.

We are grateful to the transplant recipients and donors who graciously shared their stories.
From a very young age I knew that I wanted to help others. I always thought, well, the best way that I could help people was by going into the medical field, because whenever I saw nurses and doctors on television, they really inspired me. This inspiration would later lead me to making one of the best decisions of my life.

I was 22 when I decided to go to the DMV to get my license. When I passed the exam and was filling out the paperwork, one of the questions on the forms was: “Do you want to be in the Organ/Tissue Registry?” I thought about it and said to myself; of course I would, so I checked yes. Little did I know when I checked yes that the opportunity to become a living donor would come just a few years later.

Around the same time that I received my license my aunt, Marcia, was getting very sick. As a family we didn’t quite know what was going on with her. I went to many appointments with her where they ran a lot of tests, and they just couldn’t determine what the problem was. I remember one day I was at work, and I received a call from my grandmother, Carmen, who was crying hysterically. I asked her what was wrong, and she told me my aunt was in the hospital and that she had been diagnosed with renal failure. At the time I couldn’t process everything that my grandmother was saying. We spoke for a little while longer and that’s when she gave the phone to my aunt.

My aunt made me aware that she would likely need a kidney transplant and that she had plans to go onto the waiting list for a kidney, but that she would have to do dialysis in the meantime. While it may have been a lot to take in at the time, after asking many questions and deep consideration, I decided to donate my kidney to my aunt. I knew that this would be the way to help my aunt to truly “live.” I came to the realization that my decision to go through with the transplant was the right decision for me because as I mentioned before, all I’ve ever wanted to do was to help people, and the fact that this was my aunt’s life at stake made the decision even easier.

Over the course of the following year or so, my aunt and I went through a lot of tests to make sure that I was a match. The initial process was great. Everyone I spoke to was very supportive and answered all of my questions, no matter how difficult they were. They gave me a lot of reading materials and although it was a bit overwhelming, they made me feel very comfortable. After continued on next page
Simone, continued

completing all the necessary tests we were finally given a surgery date, but I didn’t realize that there can be delays and rescheduling of the surgery date.

When our surgery date arrived we ended up having to postpone it because my aunt was extremely sick. I was devastated but also understood why the surgery couldn’t be performed. After her health improved, another date was given to us. Our new surgery date arrived, and this time it was me that was not well. They postponed the surgery again and I did everything that I could to get better quickly. At this point I was emotionally drained. Every part of me just wanted to help my aunt, but I felt like I was holding up the process.

They say the “third time is a charm”, and in our case, they were right! We received another date and although I was a bit excited I couldn’t help but think that this date would also be postponed as well. Surgery was scheduled for January 22, 2004. My aunt and I had extremely high spirits. I was physically fit, healthy, and ready to have this surgery, and as our surgery date approached I made sure I did everything I could to stay healthy, even though the surgery date was during the coldest time of the year.

Unexpectedly, a week before our surgery, an uncle who lived in Jamaica passed away. My grandmother and uncle had to go to Jamaica to take care of his funeral, which left my aunt and I here to go through with the surgery alone. Even though we didn’t want them to leave, we understood why they had to.

January 22, 2004 finally came and that was the day I was able to give my aunt the gift of life! With everything that I had been through to get to this day, I was so emotional yet extremely excited. I arrived at the hospital and got ready to be prepped for surgery. My aunt was already there from the night before. Something that I wish I had known going into my transplant surgery, is that you have to take an epidural, to numb your lower extremities so that you won't be in pain. Initially I thought that it was mandatory, but I didn’t want to take it so I asked if it would delay the surgery if I went without an epidural. The doctors told me no, so I opted to go through with the transplant surgery without the epidural. I just wish that was better explained to me in the initial stage of the transplant process.

Physically I was in a lot of pain but I knew it was all worth it because the transplant was a success! Both my aunt and I did great, and today we’re both even better! I am just as active as I was before and I have not slowed down. In fact I think I do more things now than I ever did before. I still travel with my son and enjoy hanging out with my friends and family. I didn’t realize that making a decision to be an organ donor would have such a wonderful impact on my life, but if given the option, I would do it all over again!

—By Simone Bowen, Kidney Donor, IPRO ESRD Network of New England (Network 1)
I was diagnosed with kidney failure during the year 2002. Initially, it was very difficult for me to accept the fact that I had kidney failure. One week prior to my diagnosis, I completely lost my appetite and was not urinating regularly, but I was completely unaware of what was causing my symptoms.

One night I could not fall asleep because I had difficulty breathing, and I was gasping for air. My family called the ambulance, and I was taken to the hospital. I remember wearing an oxygen mask and staring into the faces of doctors looking down at me. The doctor in charge told me that I had kidney failure. I was in a state of total shock and denial, telling the doctors that I was brought to the hospital for a breathing problem. How was that related to kidney failure? The doctor explained that he understood my reaction, since he was used to it from other kidney patients. The day after being admitted, the nephrologists brought me literature and DVDs to watch, so that I could better understand my diagnosis and treatment options. I had to choose whether I wanted to go on dialysis, and if I wanted to do hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis. I chose dialysis in order to stay alive, but it was a life changing event!

My kidneys had stopped functioning, and I had strict diet restrictions. My fluid intake was extremely limited, and there was a huge list of foods that I was not allowed to have while on dialysis, because my kidneys were no longer able to flush out the toxins that were in my body. Understanding this, also made me realize that if I did not decide to do dialysis, I would die shortly since there was no way to flush the excess fluids from my system. All of the new rules and restrictions made me feel miserable and trapped within my own skin.

Dialysis was scary, and I cried every day. Initially I started dialysis when I was in the hospital and then proceeded to dialysis treatments at a clinic. I was as scared as a rabbit, and shook like a leaf on my first day at the clinic.

While I was in the hospital my niece, Simone, told me that she was willing to donate a kidney to me, and that she would be tested to see whether she was a compatible match. She went to my transplant hospital, and the results came back showing that my niece was a perfect match!
Marcia, continued

For a little over a year I had to go three days a week to be dialyzed and for labs to ensure that I was ready for the transplant. Early in the second year of my dialysis, the date was set for my transplant. I received my kidney transplant and now take immunosuppressant medication daily. I visit the transplant clinic three times per year, to go over my medications and to have labs done, in order to make sure that the kidney is functioning well. I am now on a normal diet, and can eat and drink like a normal person.

If at any time I am ill, I visit the hospital in which I received the transplant to ensure that I get treated by the nephrologists, as I am very cautious about taking any prescription medication that would in any way cause an adverse effect to my kidney. My tip for anyone considering transplant is that if you are ever in doubt about your care post-transplant, consult with your transplant coordinator—a wonderful resource in keeping you healthy!

—By Marcia Richards, Transplant Patient, IPRO ESRD Network of New England (Network 1)
My name is Dorothy Davis, and I am a retired schoolteacher. I taught French at Minor High School in Adamsville, AL for 30 years and for most of those years, I was on some type of dialysis: In-center, Home Hemodialysis or Continuous Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis (CAPD). The nine years I spent on CAPD were very productive years because I was able to take students to France on three separate occasions. I was lucky to have students willing to carry my supplies around Europe!

On June 23, 2001, I received my second kidney transplant. Before my transplant I felt fatigued, especially the nights before and after dialysis. Sometimes I experienced bouts of depression, tired of having to be connected to a machine three times weekly in order to survive. I also felt that I was missing a lot of important events because of dialysis. I felt as if I had only half a life.

Post-transplant, things changed dramatically! The energy level was amazing. I felt ready and willing to tackle all those things I wasn’t able to do because of dialysis. Emotionally, I was happier, more optimistic and generally more satisfied with life. I felt more complete, more normal and I felt as if I “fit in” with everybody else. My second transplant lasted almost nine years. I restarted dialysis in November of 2010. The decision to be referred for another transplant was an easy one for me to make. Even after 32 years as a kidney patient, I am healthy enough for another transplant, and I am currently multi-listed at three different transplant centers in three different states: University of Alabama at Birmingham Hospital in Birmingham, AL, University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, MS, and Vanderbilt Hospital in Nashville, TN. Multi-listing gives me a stronger chance of being called for a kidney.
Dorothy, continued

I continue to keep busy as I await the call for my third transplant, teaching adult French classes several times a week and serving as an advocate for my fellow patients at my clinic and in my Network. If there is one piece of advice that I would give to a patient who wants to be referred for a transplant, it's to “Be Compliant!!” This includes following your diet, taking your binders, not missing or shortening treatments, etc. Following dialysis protocol is a good indication that a patient will also comply with transplant protocol, which can be as onerous as dialysis.

Another thing I have learned over the years and something I would definitely encourage my fellow patients to do is to try to give back. Nothing gives life more meaning than forgetting about yourself from time to time and remembering to do something for somebody else!

—By Dorothy Davis, Transplant Patient, Network 8
My name is Chris Elrod and I have been a kidney patient since April of 2000. My kidneys failed and I lost my vision due to juvenile diabetes. It was an easy decision for me to make to be evaluated for a kidney transplant. You see, I have always had this “never quit” attitude. I was never going to let kidney disease or dialysis get the best of me. I was put on the transplant list a month after starting dialysis.

After many eye surgeries to correct my vision, I was more determined than ever to get a kidney. I stayed on my diet, took my meds, and you couldn't have paid me to miss a dialysis treatment. I wanted to make sure that there were no marks against me that would keep me from getting a kidney.

I will never forget that day my beeper went off telling me to go to the hospital for a transplant. It was August 24, 2002. My surgery was done at University of Alabama at Birmingham Hospital and 12 years later I am better than ever. My labs are great. My life is fantastic! I have a job that I love in dialysis as Chief Technician/Bio Med for a great company. And I have a wife and two children that I love very much.

If ever the day comes that my kidney gives out, you can bet that I will be back on that transplant list, ASAP. It is a choice that I would make over and over again. My advice for someone who is thinking of being referred for a transplant is to do everything your doctor tells you to do. Compliance is something that we all can get tired of hearing about, but going to treatments and taking your medications doesn’t just keep you on the transplant list, it keeps you healthy so that when you do get the call to come in for a transplant, you are ready and healthy and will be well after the surgery.

—By Chris Elrod, Transplant Patient, Network 8
It was 2011 and I had just had a beautiful new baby girl and landed what I thought was the job of a lifetime, at the time, as a financial advisor. I was under a lot of stress, not sleeping well, and not eating well. I attributed all of this to the new baby and job. On the morning of December 15, 2010, my baby's first birthday, I woke up with a devastating stomach ache. I was brought by ambulance to the hospital where I was diagnosed with pancreatitis. When they took blood tests the hospital noticed that my kidney numbers were very low, but they thought it was acute and attributed it to the pancreatitis. However upon more testing they realized that it was chronic, and that I was in end stage renal disease (ESRD). Dialysis and transplant were the only options at that point, and my family was devastated by the news.

We started at one transplant facility after hearing very good reviews about its program. Unfortunately, we found them to be disorganized with a lack of follow ups regarding next steps. We also found that they provided incorrect information. After nearly nine months with absolutely NO PROGRESS, we decided to move over to another transplant facility. It was like night and day! The team at the second facility was very attentive, very organized, and within three months I was on the waiting list! After a year and a half on dialysis, a living donor came forth and on November 17, 2013, I received my new kidney.

While on dialysis I had days of nausea, listlessness, and bouts of rage and depression. Since my transplant I am back to the person I was 10–15 years ago: full of life and energy! The one piece of advice that I would give would be to do your research on hospitals and transplant teams, so that you don't waste precious time with a team that isn't right for you. Know your options and your rights so that you can surround yourself with a team that will help you accomplish your healthcare goals, and ultimately live the happy and healthy life that you deserve!

—By Roy Graham, Transplant Patient, IPRO ESRD Network of New England (Network 1)
I retired from the U.S. Post Office in 2002, a year after my wife, Elsie, retired from her job in the school system. We planned on travelling—we took cruises, and enjoyed our retirement until I started getting sick. We found out that I had high blood pressure. No matter what we did, in 2008, my kidneys failed, and I had to start dialysis.

Dialysis was getting on my nerves. I was washed out after treatments, and some days, I could barely make it to my chair when I got home. Being on dialysis for four hours, three times a week took a lot out of life. We stopped our travel plans, when we looked into taking a dialysis cruise, it was thousands of dollars, and insurance would not pay for Dialysis at Sea.

In the first few months after I started dialysis, the staff asked me if I wanted to be listed for a transplant. I was a little concerned about my age, but I said yes, and did everything that they asked. Elsie was unsure, she didn't think that they would give a kidney to someone my age. The people at the transplant center were wonderful; they treated us like family. After all of the medical tests and appointments, in 2013, Elsie was at my side when the calls came. The first call didn't work out, but two weeks later, I had a second call, a young girl had donated organs, and I was given her kidney.

I was transplanted on Tuesday, and Elsie and I were at home by Friday. At age 77, I feel like I've been born again; it's a new life. Elsie says I am happier too. Now we have time to go out to lunch, and shopping and do all of the things that I was too washed out to do when I was on dialysis. We've been married for over 55 years, and now we are looking forward to a European cruise.

I would recommend a kidney transplant to everybody, it's the only doctor's office that I don't mind going to.

—By Donnie Jacobs, Transplant Patient, IPRO ESRD Network of New York (Network 2)
One would think being born with a hereditary kidney disease would give you plenty of time to prepare for at least the thought of one day needing a transplant. Yes, one would think...

At the age of 31, I went from perfect kidney function with two polycystic kidneys, to very good kidney function with one polycystic kidney, to renal failure when my last native polycystic kidney was removed. I had many people ask how I did it every day, how my husband handled it every day. My answer was always this: “You can choose to fight and carry on, or you can choose to let it beat you.” My husband and I chose to fight, side-by-side, every step of the journey.

Our families and friends were nothing short of angels on earth. I am blessed to have two sisters, both of whom wanted to get tested, but one was not a blood match. My youngest sister, 21 at the time, already knowing she was a blood match, chose to step forward for further testing. I don’t think I’ve ever admired someone so much. She chose to get tested to save my life, and she was a match!!! She then chose to share one of her organs with me—to willingly take off work, unpaid, go under anesthesia, have surgery and GIVE me an organ from her body! There just are no words for what this means to me….to anyone who is in renal failure and at the mercy of a machine to keep them alive while they patiently wait for an organ from another human being. No words.

After the transplant, there is a whirlwind of emotions, physical changes, hormonal changes, medications, new rules, etc. all coming at you at lightning speed. The feeling I had when my sister was just taken away from me to go to the OR is something I will never forget. The feeling of relief when they said the kidney was out, my sister was doing great and the kidney was perfect is another emotional rollercoaster I will never forget. And hearing that the kidney from someone else is producing urine in your body is just awe-inspiring. And let’s not forget the excitement of being able to have chocolate, vegetables, milk, cheese, oranges and ketchup again!!! We can’t forget about the little things in life.

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My advice for anyone waiting for a kidney would be the following:

- Follow your doctor’s orders. To a large extent, your health is in your hands, just as much as it is in theirs.

- Be your own advocate. Keep copies of your records, labs, testing, etc. Report any new symptoms to your healthcare team. Be honest, don’t “pooh-pooh” your symptoms and don’t over exaggerate them either.

- Respect dialysis and transplantation. Respect all the patients that have gone before us to make the world of dialysis and transplantation what it is today. Some of us, like myself, would not be here today if it weren’t for them.

—By Chrissy Kihm, Transplant Patient, IPRO ESRD Network of New England (Network 1)
My name is Mike Luongo. I was born with a birth defect that caused my kidneys to be irreversibly damaged. When I was only a year old, my parents were informed that at best, I would be starting my young life with 40% kidney function, and one day would need a kidney transplant.

In 2002, I was in my early thirties and my kidneys started to truly fail. I was working full-time, playing softball, and had also just gotten married to the love of my life, who was always my main support through this challenging period.

As my kidneys failed, everyday it became more of a struggle to keep up with my life. I had worked as a counselor since I graduated from college, and in my line of work, you need to have the energy to be there for others, but my energy was being depleted.

I had to quit my job to start dialysis treatments. I found myself getting more and more tired every day. I had to give up playing softball, which was something that I loved. I had to make compensations for the limitations that were consuming my life. Each day became its own individual fight.

Then the day came when my second life began. On February 19, 2003, I received the Gift of Life from one heroic person. I remember entering the hospital at 6:00 a.m.. I was a little nervous, but very excited to have the transplant. I was with my wife, who kept me strong even when I was physically at my worst. I never doubted that the transplant would be successful, and I was right not to doubt.

The surgery was not only successful, it gave me the opportunity to achieve more than I ever thought possible. I spent five days in the hospital and a couple more months recuperating. My body adjusted well to the new kidney, and I became stronger than I had ever been, and most importantly, healthier than I had ever been.

I now own my own successful business, and I am still happily married to my soul mate. I also volunteer in the community (i.e. singing in my church’s choir), and for Donate Life Connecticut, because I believe that it is important to give back.

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When deciding to have the transplant, I found that it was important to remain positive. In fact, I believe that a good attitude is critical to the recovery process. It is also important to realize that there may be some challenges that you will have to face after receiving your transplant, but that the rewards far outweigh these challenges.

I cannot begin to put into words what my new kidney has meant to me and the quality of my life. I believe that the best way that I can honor my donor is to live my life to the fullest. I hope that my experiences can help you as you explore the idea of transplantation. I wish you all of the best.

—By Mike Luongo, Transplant Patient, IPRO ESRD Network of New England (Network 1)
I was an in-center hemodialysis patient for almost three years from October, 1996–August 30, 1999. As you can see I don’t remember the exact first date of dialysis but I do remember the very last date. I was at the dialysis center finishing up my Monday evening treatment when the University of Mississippi Medical Center called the center with the news of a kidney for me. They had tried unsuccessfully to reach me at home and called the center for an alternate contact number. The next day, Tuesday August 31, 1999, I received a wonderful gift from a kind, unselfish and loving family—the gift of a new kidney.

My advice to a patient who is very new to dialysis is to read and research as much information as you can about dialysis treatments and diets to help you feel good and do well. Ask questions about any medication you are given while at dialysis, to better understand its purpose and how it helps your care. Just look at dialysis as another form of treatment to help you feel better, and be actively involved in your care. Watch your fluid intake, and you should do well; you might feel a little tired afterwards but a couple of hours of rest and you will feel better.

As I previously stated, I was fortunate to receive a kidney transplant after 34 months on dialysis. Prior to my transplant I would sometimes be extremely tired right after my dialysis treatment. However, I went to dialysis after completing at least eight hours of work that day. Therefore, I would go home, get a meal and after a good night’s rest, the next day I was fine.

Initially I went through an emotional pity party after being told it was time to go on dialysis. I was depressed and feeling sorry for myself because only three months earlier, I had received a promotion at work. It was a position with more responsibility and one directing the work of second-level managers. I just knew with dialysis, my life as I once lived it would be over and I would have to resign my job. However, my adult son, my friends, and my social worker at the dialysis center helped me to see that my life could be whatever I wanted it to be; the decision was up to me. Therefore, I pulled myself up out of the slump I was in, made arrangements with the dialysis center to take my treatments on the late shift—after finishing my work tour, and learned to deal with it.

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Tuesday morning, August 31, 1999, I received my kidney transplant and all I could think about when I woke up was, “what can I do to repay this wonderful gift?” After the transplant, I had so much more energy and felt good after the surgery healed; I went back to work after six weeks. Several months later, I learned that in the deepest moment of despair a family who lost their 13-year old son had donated his organs and gave me and some others a new lease on life. I knew I had to do something to give back and show thanks for this precious gift. Just seven weeks earlier, I had earned a new title, grandmother; actually I’m called MeMe.

For a patient wanting to be referred for a transplant, my advice is to be compliant with your treatment plan at the dialysis center and try to stay healthy. This includes following your diet, taking your meds and showing up for your treatments. Talking to other transplant recipients can also help you to understand what to expect and if transplant is a treatment for you.

For those patients who are withdrawn and not involved in their care, I would say to them: “If you think you’re not going to do well, then you won’t do well. Therefore only you can determine what works for you and what makes you feel bad or good. You must want to do well with your treatment, and that involves being an active member of your care team.”

My approach to life is to live each day to its fullest and to enjoy life, but I still take care of myself. Each day I give thanks for what I have and practice that it’s more blessed to give than to receive.

—By Carolyn Price, Transplant Patient, Network 8
I started dialysis in 2005, and it was really scary at first and very hard to adjust to because end stage renal disease caught me (and my wife) by surprise. I had recently married, and we had moved into a newly built home just six months prior to my renal failure. It was extremely difficult for my wife and me, but we knew that everything happens for a reason. Even now, I look back on all the days I did dialysis and am amazed at how we made it through with our sanity. God is an awesome GOD! We know firsthand that the help of the Lord, family and friends in the dialysis community has helped us cope, understand each stage we’ve gone through, and gotten us past these tests that have been given to us.

I was on dialysis for seven and a half years and on the transplant list for six years before we got the call. The decision to be referred for a transplant was an easy one. I wanted to have the best option that I could find to live a normal, healthy life. I wanted to continue to work and take care of my wife, so when my nurses asked me if I wanted to be referred for a transplant, it was a “no brainer.” My long awaited call came on Thursday night at 10:30 p.m. on April 25, 2013.

You will be extremely sore after the surgery, but the benefit of not having to do dialysis is worth all the pain. If you have experienced surgery before, you know that your body just needs time to heal. Do not rush the healing process, and follow the instructions of your doctors for maximum benefits. Once you regain your strength you will soon remember how great it feels to be independent and to have energy. You will have to take a lot of medicines, but over time the amount of medications you need will decrease somewhat.

If there is one piece of advice that I would give to someone who is thinking about being referred for a transplant, I would simply say “Do It right away!” Contact your social worker for information and talk to your doctor about your options to fully understand the entire transplant process. Then, after you get your transplant, don’t take your gift for granted. Show your gratitude for this wonderful gift by living your life to the fullest each and every day!

—By Kennedy Taylor, Transplant Patient, Network 8
My name is Jack Thomas, and I live in Mars, PA, with my wife, Annabelle. I would like to share how it came about that I received a kidney transplant on June 18, 2013.

It all began when I went to my primary care physician for a simple annual check-up at age 73. The doctor suggested I have a creatinine test. I had never heard of such a test before. The results of this test indicated my kidneys were failing and I would eventually have to go on dialysis. Annabelle and I did not know what dialysis was. After the doctor explained exactly what dialysis was and what was all involved with the treatments, we felt it was something we did not want to go through. When Annabelle asked the doctor what would happen if I did not go on dialysis, he looked straight at us and said, “Jack would die.” We were in shock. As we look back now, we realize this honest answer was the best thing to help us realize the reality we were facing.

Ultimately, I did begin dialysis treatment in 2008, at Seven Fields Dialysis Clinic. I must say it was an overall good experience because of the dedicated nurses and technicians who gave me my treatment every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. I also knew in my heart that by having a good, healthy, positive attitude, it would be best for me as well as for many others sitting around me facing the same problem.

After being on dialysis and getting into a routine, I was thrilled to find out I would not be deprived of enjoying life while I was on dialysis. During the five years I was on dialysis, I was still able to leave for our annual trip to Florida for five months each year. My home clinic here in Pennsylvania made all the arrangements with the clinic in Florida in advance of my arrival. I simply had to walk in for my treatment on Tuesday, and went on with my life in Florida.

Everything changed on June 18, 2013. On that day, while receiving treatment at the Seven Fields Dialysis Clinic, I received a telephone call...
from Allegheny General Hospital (A.G.H.). They told me they had a “perfectly matched kidney” from a nine year old boy and I should come to the hospital immediately after my treatment. They assured me I would have a new kidney before the end of the day. I cried when I heard this news. Knowing that someone has lost a loved one but had selflessly given me another opportunity at living life to the fullest, even at my age, brought me to tears.

My transplant surgery was on a Tuesday. When the doctors saw my wife and me walking the halls of the hospital two days after surgery had been performed, they were amazed at how well I was doing. I was discharged by Saturday. During my recovery at home, I had weekly blood work drawn and sent to the hospital, I had a monthly check up with the doctor at A.G.H., and I began a strict regimen of required medications which I took faithfully. And now, just ten months after my kidney transplant, I’m out mowing the lawn and actually doing everything I did before but just a little slower. (Maybe at age 84 that could be expected.) My wife and I had struggled with the transplant referral steps but with encouragements from the nurses, social workers, and doctors we decided to take a leap of faith. Looking back, we had made the right decision.

I must express my gratitude and thanks for the many prayers from friends and family. It is because of our deep faith in God; He has been with us through this whole journey. Thank you for asking me to share this very vital and wonderful part of my life. I trust this may encourage someone else with a similar situation and experience.

—By John W. Thomas (Jack), Transplant Patient, Quality Insights Renal Network 4
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NETWORK 3 (NJ, PR, VI)
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FMQAI: The Florida ESRD Network
3000 Bayport Drive, Suite 300, Tampa, FL 33607
Phone: (813) 383-1530 • Fax: (813) 354-1514
Toll-free for patients: (800) 826-3773

NETWORK 8 (AL, MS, TN)
Network 8, Inc.
755 Woodlands Parkway, Suite 310
Ridgeland, MS 39157
Phone: (601) 936-9260 • Fax: (601) 932-4446
Toll-free for patients: (877) 936-9260

NETWORK 9 (IN, KY, OH)
The Renal Network, Inc.
911 East 86th Street, Suite 202
Indianapolis, IN 46240
Phone: (317) 257-8265
Fax: (317) 257-8291 / 2120
Toll-free for patients: (800) 456-6919

NETWORK 10 (IL)
The Renal Network, Inc.
911 East 86th Street, Suite 202
Indianapolis, IN 46240
Phone: (317) 257-8265
Fax: (317) 257-8291/2120
Toll-free for patients: (800) 456-6919

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NETWORK 11 (MI, MN, ND, SD, WI)
Renal Network of the Upper Midwest, Inc.
1360 Energy Park Drive, Suite 200
St. Paul, MN 55108
Phone: (651) 644-9877 • Fax: (651) 644-9853
Toll-free for patients: (800) 973-3773

NETWORK 12 (IA, KS, MO, NE)
Heartland Kidney Network
920 Main Street, Suite 801
Kansas City, MO 64105
Phone: (816) 880-9990 • Fax: (816) 880-9088
Toll-free for patients: (800) 444-9965

NETWORK 13 (AR, LA, OK)
HSAG: ESRD Network 13
4200 Perimeter Center Drive, Suite 102
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
Phone: (405) 942-6000 • Fax: (405) 942-6884
Toll-free for patients: (800) 472-8664

NETWORK 14 (TX)
ESRD Network of Texas, Inc.
4040 McEwen Road, Suite 350
Dallas, TX 75244
Phone: (972) 503-3215 • Fax: (972) 503-3219
Toll-free for patients: (877) 886-4435

NETWORK 15 (AZ, CO, NV, NM, UT, WY)
Intermountain ESRD Network, Inc.
165 South Union Boulevard, Suite 466
Lakewood, CO 80228
Phone: (303) 831-8818 • Fax: (303) 860-8392
Toll-free for patients: (800) 783-8818

NETWORK 16 (AK, ID, MT, OR, WA)
Northwest Renal Network
4702 42nd Avenue SW, Seattle, WA 98116
Phone: (206) 923-0714 • Fax: (206) 923-0716
Toll-free for patients: (800) 262-1514

NETWORK 17 (AS, GU, HI, MP, N. CA)
Western Pacific Renal Network, LLC
505 San Marin Drive, Building A, Suite 300
Novato, CA 94945
Phone: (415) 897-2400 • Fax: (415) 897-2422
Toll-free for patients: (800) 232-3773

NETWORK 18 (S. CA)
FMQAI: ESRD Network 18
700 North Brand Blvd., Suite 370
Glendale, CA 91203
Phone: (888) 268-1539 • Fax: (888) 280-8669
Toll-free for patients: (800) 637-4767