

## Carrier donates kidney; gains perspective

**P**atrick Michael had seen the posters appealing for a kidney donor around Montpelier, OH, where he delivers mail as a part-time flexible (PTF) letter carrier. He didn't think about getting tested to learn whether he was a potential donor until his son, Uriah, said he wanted to help—the woman who needed the kidney, 28-year-old Tanya Likens, was a former classmate of his son. Uriah had seen Likens' appeal for a kidney on Facebook.

Likens was diagnosed with kidney disease when she was 9 years old, and dialysis had kept it at bay until three years ago, when she was added to the transplant list.

A matching donor could have come from anywhere in the world, but by coincidence, Likens' home is on one of the routes Michael often serves as a PTF.

Patrick Michael, a member of Toledo, OH Branch 100 and an Army veteran who served in the Persian Gulf War, provided a blood sample and soon learned he was a match. But there were more tests to be performed before he could donate one of his kidneys to her.

Although most people have two kidneys, the National Kidney Foundation says people with just one kidney can live healthy, normal lives.

"It was about a year before we got the final OK," he said. The donation almost didn't go through when a scan showed he had an extra blood vessel leading to his left kidney, which could complicate transplanting it to the recipient. But then he saw a notice on Likens' Facebook page that said the University of Michigan Hospital in Ann Arbor was equipped to handle anatomical issues like his. Doctors there told him they could do the surgery.



PTF Patrick Michael with Tanya Likens

"When Patrick reached out to me," Likens said, "there was light at the end of the tunnel."

Though the process of ensuring that Michael was a match had taken nearly a year, the transplant surgery, which was performed at University of Michigan Hospital last September, was quick. "It was just a matter of going up there and it happened pretty quickly after that," he said. "Snip, snip, and it's done. It's a pretty routine procedure." All of his time off from work for the procedure and recovery was covered by sick leave.

Michael said he and Likens are both healthy and keeping in contact. "We're going to have a one-year transplant anniversary thing—hang out, have a barbecue," he said. "She's doing good; I'm doing good."

Many people have called Michael a hero, but the modest letter carrier

downplays that label.

"I think 'hero' is a strong word," he said. "The surgery is not that complicated. The risks are really not that great. I had a little bit of discomfort, but the other person gets a better chance at life."

Branch 100 President Mike Hayden disagrees and had high praise for Michael. "He did something that I hope I would do, but I don't know if I would have the courage to follow through with," he said.

At a branch award ceremony, branch members gave Michael a standing ovation.

"Everybody is very proud of him," Hayden said. "He's a credit to NALC and this branch."

For Michael, the good feeling that came with providing that better chance at life made it worth the effort.

"I got as much out of it as she did," he said. **PR**