

2024

SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
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UPMC HARRISBURG KIDNEY TRANSPLANT

Thanks to the commitment and expertise of UPMC Harrisburg Kidney Transplant Services team — coupled with surgical innovations and the latest technology, paired kidney exchange programs, and more — patients who couldn't see a way forward are now part of our remarkable history.

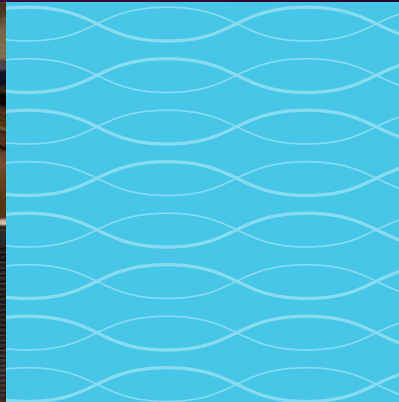
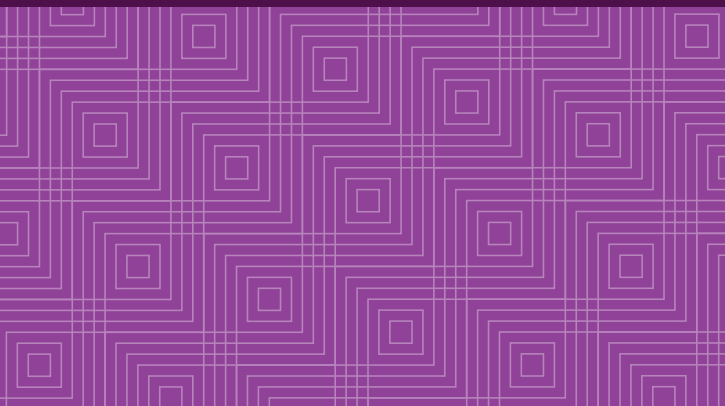
Thanks to advanced academic and research knowledge, our program offers the latest breakthroughs in transplant science and donation options. Certified by the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the UPMC Harrisburg Kidney Transplant Services team takes pride in providing high quality and personalized care and services.

Our experienced and compassionate transplant team — surgeons, nephrologists, nurse practitioners, transplant coordinators, nursing staff, social workers, financial coordinators, Independent Living Donor Advocate, and other professionals — works closely with patients, living donors, and their families throughout the transplant journey. Our goal is to provide them with all the emotional and practical support they want and need.

The stories in this calendar are shining examples of strength, compassion, bravery, expertise, and tenacity. We are proud to provide the most advanced, quality care for our kidney transplant patients — and we are honored that many now consider us to be part of their families.

We hope that you enjoy reading about the journeys of those whose lives have been transformed by kidney transplantation at UPMC Harrisburg.

May you have a happy, healthy New Year!



OUR PHYSICIANS



**Harold Yang, MD, PhD
Surgeon**

Dr. Yang earned his medical degree at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine and his PhD from the University of Chicago. He completed a fellowship in renal transplantation at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. Dr. Yang is certified by the American Board of Surgery.



**Manish Gupta, MD
Surgeon**

Dr. Gupta completed a transplant surgery research fellowship at Penn State Health Milton S. Hersey Medical Center and a clinical fellowship for abdominal multi-organ transplant surgery at the University of Cincinnati. A graduate of the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University, Dr. Gupta is chair of the medical advisory and policy board for the Gift of Life donor program.



**Danielle Ladie, MD,
MPH, FACS
Surgeon**

Dr. Ladie earned her medical degree from St. George's University and completed a residency at UPMC Harrisburg, where she served as chief resident. She also completed a transplant surgery fellowship at the University of Virginia. She has a special interest in hepatobiliary surgery.



**Vijay G. Menon, MD
Surgeon**

Dr. Menon received his medical degree from University College London Medical School and completed his surgical residency at the University of California San Diego Medical Center. He completed fellowship training in abdominal organ transplantation at Massachusetts General Hospital.



**Manpreet Singh, MD
Nephrologist**

A graduate of Government Medical College in Patiala, India, Dr. Singh completed his residency at SUNY Stony Brook Medical Center in New York. Dr. Singh completed a nephrology fellowship at Boston University and a transplant nephrology fellowship at the University of California San Francisco Medical Center.



**Mary Waybill, MD
Nephrologist**

Dr. Waybill earned her medical degree from the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University in Philadelphia. She completed her residency and a fellowship in nephrology at the Medical College of Virginia. Dr. Waybill oversees transplant research and participates in the management of patients with complex medical issues.



**William Hoffman, MD
Nephrologist**

A graduate of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Dr. Hoffman completed his residency at University of Rochester Strong Memorial Hospital. He completed a nephrology fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, where he was chief fellow. Dr. Hoffman also completed a fellowship in transplant nephrology and a research fellowship in transplant immunology at Pitt's School of Medicine.



JEFF SEYFERT
 Recipient • Age 52 • Annville, Pa.

MANDI SMITH
 Donor • Age 43 • Annville, Pa.

It really can be a small world. Jeff Seyfert and Mandi Smith live about a mile apart. And just when Jeff learned he needed a kidney transplant, Mandi was thinking about becoming a kidney donor. They didn't know one another, but Facebook, friends, and family connections brought them together.

In November 2020, Jeff was feeling tired and his legs were swollen. "I thought it was all the hours I was working. I went in for a check-up and found out my creatinine was extremely high," he says. High creatinine levels mean your kidneys are struggling. "My doctor asked if I was on dialysis because I was in kidney failure. I wasn't! I didn't feel sick like that."

"I saw a UPMC kidney doctor in Lancaster who told me, 'You're a lucky man, I should put you in the hospital right now,'" says Jeff. Diagnosed with polycystic kidney disease, he started dialysis and was officially placed on the transplant list in July 2021.

Around the time of Jeff's diagnosis, Mandi was wondering how she could make a difference during the COVID-19 pandemic. "So many difficult things were happening and there was such a feeling of despair in the world," recalls Mandi. "My family and I were healthy. I felt blessed and wanted to share that." She was scrolling through Facebook and saw a post about someone needing a kidney. "Reading that lit a spark in me," she says. "Then a friend told me about someone local searching for a donor, and I knew this was what I needed to do."

Mandi called UPMC Harrisburg Kidney Transplant Services and told them she wanted to donate her kidney to Jeff. "It was a long process and very thorough, but the transplant team was great," says Mandi. "They made sure this was a healthy decision for me as the donor — both physically and mentally."

Jeff and Mandi went through a successful kidney transplant at UPMC Harrisburg on Jan. 4, 2022. "We met for the first time in April 2022," says Jeff. "She's been a godsend. I have so much more energy now, and I tease Mandi that she gave me her runner's energy."

"I'm so happy I could help Jeff and his family," says Mandi. "As far as having one kidney now? My life is exactly the same, though I do try to drink more water. It's amazing to me that two people who didn't know one another discovered how close we are — in distance, in the connections to my family and friends, and now through a kidney."

JANUARY 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 NEW YEAR'S DAY	2	3	4	4	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

NOTES

OZZIE MARTIN

Recipient • Age 65 • York, Pa.

Ozzie Martin has a strong family history of diabetes, so he wasn't surprised to learn at age 30 that he had the disease. Guided by his faith, he credits God's grace and strength for getting him through life's changes and challenges. "Whatever God has in store for me, that's what I go with. I can't change what is to be," he says.

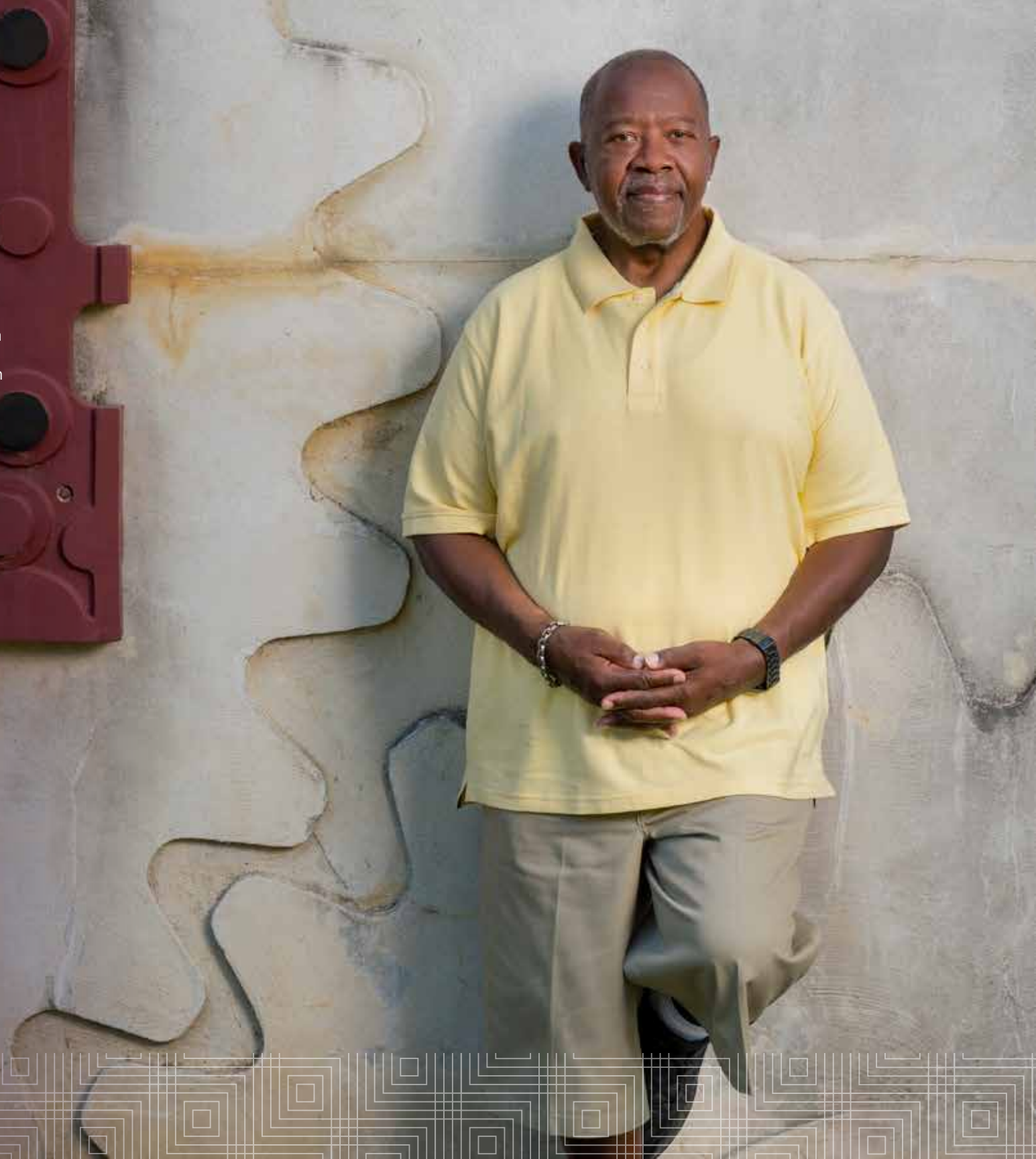
By the time doctors diagnosed him with end-stage kidney disease as a result of his diabetes, Ozzie knew he'd need to start dialysis treatment. "My two brothers, an aunt, and an uncle were already on dialysis when I started in 2005," he explains. Starting dialysis can be an overwhelming experience. For Ozzie, it was an easy transition because he knew what to expect.

For more than 15 years, Ozzie spent three days a week undergoing dialysis at a nearby clinic in York, Pa. "I knew it wouldn't get better because my nephrologist kept pushing me to consider a transplant, but I was in denial," he explains. The UPMC Harrisburg Kidney Transplant Services team encouraged Ozzie to be evaluated for a kidney transplant. But when a kidney became available in 2011, he turned it down.

"Instead of realizing surgery was a chance to make my life better, it was my biggest fear," he says. "That's why I didn't want to participate." But when a kidney became available in 2021, Ozzie was finally ready. "Everyone had been working with me to build up my confidence — but I also knew that whatever God had in store for me was going to be," he says. Ozzie underwent successful transplant surgery on Nov. 6, 2021, performed by Danielle Ladie, MD, at UPMC Harrisburg.

The 65-year-old father, grandfather, and brother says he can now do things he hasn't been able to do in years — shopping, traveling, attending family functions, and visiting friends. "I can even use the bathroom again," he adds with a chuckle. Family support has been essential to his successful transplant journey. But there are two women who have stayed especially close to him. "My stepdaughter Leashia is my caregiver. She comes here every day to check on me," he says. "My daughter Shyla has been my rock and I can't thank her enough."

A year after his transplant, Ozzie says he's grateful to the entire UPMC Harrisburg Kidney Transplant Services team for helping to ease his fears of surgery and build his confidence in the transplant process. "They have been there with me every step. From the transplant coordinator to the new social worker and the finance people — I've been blessed with their support. I couldn't ask for a better team. I love them all."



FEBRUARY 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2 GROUNDHOG DAY	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 NATIONAL DONOR DAY VALENTINE'S DAY	15	16	17	18
19	20 PRESIDENTS' DAY	21 MARDI GRAS	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

NOTES

CHERYL SOLLENBERGER

Two-Time Recipient • Age 54 • Chambersburg, Pa.

A few months before her high school graduation, Cheryl Sollenberger had a strep throat infection that seriously damaged her kidneys. "It's a rare complication, but it does happen," she says.

In November 1987 after a year on dialysis, Cheryl received her first kidney transplant. Her surgeon was Harold Yang, MD. Nearly 35 years later, Dr. Yang performed her second kidney transplant. "He's such a good doctor," says Cheryl. "I liked him so much that I stayed with him when he joined UPMC Harrisburg."

Cheryl led a busy and full life after her first transplant. With health issues behind her, she got married and raised four children. "We were an active family," she says. "We loved to travel and took lots of trips to the beach and other places with the kids."

But in 2016, Cheryl was diagnosed with vulvar cancer and underwent surgery and radiation treatment. She is now cancer free. "I also went through early menopause," she adds. "It was just an awful time."

Regular posttransplant visits with Dr. Yang to monitor her kidney function and detect any possible complications had been routine for Cheryl. On average, transplanted kidneys last 10 to 12 years. Cheryl's kidney had been working fine for nearly 30 years when Dr. Yang explained that her kidney was "aging" and she eventually would need a second transplant.

Five years after her last radiation treatment for cancer — and four years into her second round of dialysis — Cheryl met with the team at UPMC Harrisburg Kidney Transplant Services. She was placed on the transplant waiting list in early May 2022.

Within months, the transplant team found a "perfect match" deceased-donor kidney for Cheryl. Perfect match kidneys are more likely to function well in the long term. "My husband was getting ready to be tested to donate one of his kidneys to me," she says. "But I decided to accept the perfect match."

She had her second transplant surgery on June 26, 2022. "When Dr. Yang came in to see me before the operation, he said, 'Yes, let's do this again!'" Five days later, Cheryl left UPMC Harrisburg with a well-functioning kidney. "I'm very fortunate," she said. "It has given me more energy and I feel healthier."

"I can't say enough about the transplant team at UPMC Harrisburg," adds Cheryl. "They're hoping this kidney lasts for the rest of my life. I plan to take good care of it so it does."

MARCH 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 WORLD KIDNEY DAY	10	11
12 DAYLIGHT SAVING BEGINS	13	14	15	16	17 ST. PATRICK'S DAY	18
19	20 FIRST DAY OF SPRING	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

NOTES

MIRANDA NIXON

Recipient • Age 24 • Harrisburg, Pa.

MARY OLIVEIRA

Living Donor • Age 50 • Enola, Pa.

Miranda Nixon was 17 and headed to college on a full basketball scholarship when she was diagnosed with focal segmental glomerulosclerosis — a rare disease that causes scarring of the filters in the kidneys. Because her kidneys couldn't clean her blood properly, she developed high blood pressure that led to kidney damage. "They told me I'd need a transplant in 10 to 15 years," says Miranda. "Unfortunately, my disease progressed a lot faster."

Remarkably, Miranda enrolled at Holy Cross University where she earned a sociology degree in 2019. The 6-foot, 3-inch forward also played all four years on the women's basketball team. "I didn't feel that bad. But after graduating, everything snowballed," she says.

In July 2019 Miranda was hospitalized with blood pressure complications. By the following February, she was in acute renal failure. She began in-home dialysis and was put on the transplant list. After taking time off from her job as a behavioral health specialist, Miranda returned to work and even coached high school basketball while awaiting a kidney. "I decided to live my life as a somewhat normal 22-year-old. I didn't want to hold back," she says.

As her condition deteriorated, family members were evaluated as living donors but were unable to donate. Then Miranda's mother, Tina, put out a plea for a donor on her social media.

Mary Oliveira says she will never forget the day she read the message posted by her friend and colleague: "I'm a desperate mom and my child needs help."

"My decision was instantaneous. I had to try and help Miranda," says Mary. After talking it over with her husband, she contacted UPMC Harrisburg Kidney Transplant Services to start the process. "Five months later they gave me the gift of calling Tina to give her the news," she says.

To allow Miranda to receive a kidney from a more compatible donor, the team encouraged Mary to participate in a paired exchange. Mary was approved as part of a paired exchange. "I had a moment or two of hesitation when they brought it up. But my daughter pointed out, 'You're actually saving two lives, not one.' That was humbling," says Mary.

Ironically, Miranda's transplant was canceled because her donor was exposed to COVID-19. But three months later, she got the call that another match had been found and underwent surgery in June 2021. Miranda returned to work as a behavioral health specialist and high school girls' basketball coach. "I'm so thankful to Mary. She made her donation months before I got my kidney. She was key to the whole thing," says Miranda. "I'm forever in her debt."

"I was relieved when Miranda finally got her kidney," says Mary. "I have no regrets. It was an absolute joy to donate for a friend's child. And seeing her thriving now is so rewarding."



APRIL 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 APRIL FOOLS' DAY
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 EASTER SUNDAY	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22 EARTH DAY
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

NOTES

MICHAEL PADULA

Recipient • Age 37 • Lake Ariel, Pa.

Michael was just 23 years old when he learned he had polycystic kidney disease, a genetic disorder passed down through his family. Tests showed his right kidney was already enlarged with a massive cyst. "My doctor told me it would eventually lead to kidney failure," he says. "I knew a transplant was coming."

Over the next several years, Michael's kidney function steadily declined. By age 26, he was in stage 3 kidney disease. At age 30, he was placed on the kidney transplant waiting list and began dialysis to maintain his kidney function. "It got real when I started dialysis," says Michael. "It took over my life."

Michael spent six years on dialysis while awaiting a kidney. He started with in-home dialysis, hooking himself up to a machine every night after working at a local grocery store. But when complications developed, he switched to treatments at a dialysis center.

"It was draining. Between work and dialysis, I had no days to rest or relax. My days off were dialysis days," he says.

Michael tried to find a living donor, but no one worked out — potential donors were either not a match, developed health issues, or had conflicts due to the pandemic. In 2020, Michael received a phone call telling him he was a backup for transplant surgery. He made the three-hour trip from his home in Lake Ariel, Pa., to Harrisburg, only to return home without a new kidney. "That happened to me five times," says Michael. "It was discouraging. But I had to go down there. If that first person was a no-go, I had to be ready."

Finally, in August 2021 at age 36, Michael got a call that a match had been found. This time, he was first in line for a kidney from a deceased donor. "How fast can you get here?" the caller asked.

"I felt better right away after surgery. When I got home, I walked around and wanted to keep going," says Michael. "It had been a long time since I felt that good. I wasn't out of breath, I wasn't tired. It was the old me."

Michael now walks about a mile a day and looks forward to rejoining his bowling league. He's grateful for his donor and UPMC Harrisburg. "I felt sad knowing someone lost their life. But I am thankful for the gift they gave me. It saved my life," he says.

"I'm also thankful for the wonderful care I received from the entire UPMC transplant team. Everyone there took great care of me."



MAY 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5 CINCO DE MAYO	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 MOTHER'S DAY	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29 MEMORIAL DAY	30	31			

NOTES



YORRO SANYANG

Recipient • Age 61 • Kingston, Pa.

Growing up in The Gambia, West Africa, Yorro was a track and field athlete, representing his country in regional competitions. "I hoped to qualify for the Olympics but an injury forced me to stop training," he says.

Yorro went on to become a telecommunications technician — and a civil rights leader fighting against apartheid (a system of institutionalized segregation based on race) in his country. Because of his activism, Yorro was forced to leave the country when the government was overthrown in a bloodless coup. "In 1995, I thankfully was granted asylum to come to America," he says. His wife Awa and children soon joined him.

A brief stay in New York City made it clear it was too expensive to raise his growing family there. A relative once lived in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., so Yorro and his wife visited the area. They chose nearby Kingston, Pa., as their new home. "Kingston gave us all we needed as a family: the chance to live happily in a safe and welcoming place," he says.

In 2005, Yorro was diagnosed with high blood pressure. "Knowing that I had it, and even though hypertension runs in my family, for years I never took it seriously," he says. "By the time I realized the repercussions, it was too late."

On Christmas Eve 2014, Yorro experienced unbearable knee and joint pain. A niece took him to the hospital where he was diagnosed with renal failure. He immediately began dialysis and was placed on the transplant waiting list. He went for dialysis every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for six long years. "I had to quit my job as a truck driver because I even had trouble standing up and walking," says Yorro.

Yorro's health was further threatened when he contracted COVID-19 in 2020. "I spent three weeks in intensive care and was put on a ventilator," he recalls. "It's a miracle that I survived."

Finally, Yorro received the call he'd been waiting for: a potential deceased-donor kidney was available. "I was exactly where you'd expect to find me — at the dialysis center," he says. Danielle Ladie, MD, led his successful transplant at UPMC Harrisburg in the early hours of Aug. 19, 2021. "Everyone involved was amazing. No one could believe how quickly I recovered. And now I feel like a free bird compared to the restrictions I had before the transplant," he says.

Yorro's advice for others waiting for a transplant is to be patient and have faith. "There's only so much you have control over," he says. "But if you have hope, build your courage, and continue to praise life, good things do happen. I am proof of that."

JUNE 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14 FLAG DAY	15	16	17
18 FATHER'S DAY	19	20	21 FIRST DAY OF SUMMER	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

NOTES



MEGAN HUMPHREY

Recipient • Age 28 • Hagerstown, Md.

Only about one in 1,000 babies is born with a single kidney — and Megan Humphrey is one of them. “My mom and dad found out I only had one kidney on a sonogram before I was born,” she explains.

One functioning kidney can do the job of two, so Megan enjoyed a pretty normal life with few health problems. But some people with one kidney are at higher risk for complications that include reduced kidney function and high blood pressure. Both health issues would plague Megan as she got older — and eventually would lead to her needing a kidney transplant.

At 16, Megan was diagnosed with high blood pressure and began taking medicine to control it. When she found out she was pregnant, her nephrologist advised her to stop taking the blood pressure medicine. Pregnancy put a lot of stress on a Megan’s body. Her kidney function dropped below 40%. The combination of reduced kidney function and uncontrolled high blood pressure put Megan’s life — and the life of her baby — in serious jeopardy. In October 2020, her daughter Amelia Lou was stillborn. “It was just a very difficult time,” she recalls. “My kidney started to fail rapidly after that.”

Over the next two years, Megan’s kidney function continued to decline. “When it dropped to 14%, my nephrologist said, ‘I think it’s time you started the process of getting on the transplant list.’ She referred me to UPMC Harrisburg. So, I listened to her.”

Megan was put onto the transplant waiting list in late February. Her father and an aunt had already started the testing process to become living donors. Within three weeks, Megan learned she was one of three possible recipients of a donor kidney. “The transplant team told me it was probably a fluke and not to get my hopes up,” she recalls. Instead, the donor kidney was a perfect match. On Saturday, March 12, 2022, Megan had successful kidney transplant surgery at UPMC Harrisburg. She’d been on the transplant waiting list for just 28 days.

“I love everyone at UPMC,” she notes. “The whole team made me feel like family. They really cared about me. Dr. Yang was especially great. And thanks to my new kidney, I’m off blood pressure medicine for the first time in 12 years!”

Family and friends have always known Megan to be upbeat, happy-go-lucky — and very talkative. After the transplant, Megan’s colleagues were excited to have the “old Megan” back at work. “Before the transplant, I was getting a little down. But now I’ve got my perk back. I call myself Megan 2.0,” she says.

JULY 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2	3	4 INDEPENDENCE DAY	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

NOTES

SON TAMANG

Recipient • Age 35 • Harrisburg, Pa.

BUDDHI TAMANG

Donor • Age 34 • Harrisburg, Pa.

In October 2010, Son and Buddhi Tamang came to the United States from their homeland of Nepal — part of what was then one of the United Nations’ largest international refugee resettlement efforts. Just in their early 20s, the young couple settled in Georgia with their growing family, finding work as in-home caregivers.

Family is very important to Son and Buddhi. They discovered just how important a family’s love and support is eight years later when Son learned he needed a new kidney.

In March 2018, Son came home from work with a high temperature and high blood pressure. “We immediately went to the emergency department,” he says. “They did tests and found out I was in kidney failure.” Son had IgA nephropathy, a rare disease where a buildup of proteins lowers the kidneys’ ability to filter waste and fluid from the blood. It results in swelling and kidney damage. “When the nephrologist told me I needed a new kidney, I was shocked,” says Son. “I don’t drink or smoke. There was nothing that would lead me to think that I’d need a new kidney.”

The doctor asked if he had a support system to help him and his family through a transplant. “Our families live in Harrisburg, so we moved right away to be closer to them,” says Son. They went to UPMC Harrisburg Kidney Transplant Services to begin the transplant process, and Son was placed on the transplant waiting list in July 2018.

“There were times when I felt hopeless,” admits Son. But that changed with the help of the doctors and staff at UPMC and especially the support of his family. “I came to terms with needing a transplant,” he says. “I had to do what was needed and then I could move forward.”

For three years, Son went for dialysis three days a week. By 2021, the couple was increasingly worried that he been on the transplant list for so long. Buddhi decided to donate her kidney. “I love and support him,” says Buddhi. “I donated to give him a new life with me and our young children.”

In November 2021, Buddhi donated her kidney and Son received his transplant. Both surgeries went smoothly. “When I woke up the next morning, it was such a relief to be able to go to the bathroom by myself,” Son remembers. “It felt like I was back to normal!”

“The transplant has been a blessing for our whole family,” says Buddhi. “We’re so fortunate to have the support of our families,” adds Son. “I’m especially grateful for Buddhi. She gave me the gift of life.”



AUGUST 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

NOTES





NADINE SWEIGERT

Recipient • Age 50 • Shermans Dale, Pa.

CHARLES SWEIGERT

Living Donor • Age 53 • Shermans Dale, Pa.

Nadine Sweigert never got an engagement ring, but she did receive a life-saving gift from Charles, her boyfriend and future husband: his left kidney.

They had only been dating two weeks when Nadine, then 35, learned she needed a transplant. Diagnosed at age 21 with lupus, the autoimmune disease had slowly damaged her kidneys. Pregnancy and childbirth caused more damage.

“I was tired, but I was working full time and raising a daughter as a single mom,” says Nadine. “I thought for sure they’d mixed up my results with someone else. But the doctor said my kidneys were failing.”

When she told Charles the news, he immediately offered his own kidney. “I was amazed. We hadn’t been dating long,” says Nadine. “But there was no hesitation.”

“Until then, my mindset about organ donation was: I was born with it and I’m leaving with it,” explains Charles. “That changed when someone I loved needed a transplant. I knew in my soul that’s why we were brought together.”

Nadine’s parents and sister had already offered to donate a kidney. But Charles insisted on being evaluated as a potential donor. “You’re testing the wrong people,” he kept repeating. As it turned out, none of her family members qualified or were a good match. Charles — the last person tested — turned out to be a “perfect match.”

“I truly believe it was a match made in heaven,” says Charles. “I had to give her a kidney. How can I love her if she’s not around?”

On Oct. 16, 2007, Nadine received Charles’ kidney. “It started working immediately,” she says. “I had so much more energy. I didn’t realize how bad I was until I had the transplant.” Another benefit: her lupus has been in remission ever since the transplant due to immunosuppression.

Charles, then 38, and Nadine left the hospital together to recuperate at her mother’s house. Two weeks later, he was back at work as an industrial copper polisher. Although they opted to skip an engagement ring to save money, they married two years later in a beachfront ceremony in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

“Donating my kidney is the greatest thing I’ve ever done,” says Charles. “We got married and the woman I love is still here. Her quality of life is better because of something I did. That’s gratifying.”

“I knew we’d be connected forever. I have a piece of him inside of me,” says Nadine. “How do you thank someone for that gift? Because of him, my daughter still has her mother. I’m forever grateful.”

SEPTEMBER 2023

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

						1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
	LABOR DAY						
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
					ROSH HASHANAH BEGINS AT SUNDOWN		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
							FIRST DAY OF AUTUMN
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
YOM KIPPUR BEGINS AT SUNDOWN							

NOTES

VICTOR FONSECA GUERRERO
 Recipient • Age 65 • Bendersville, Pa.

Victor's face lights up when he talks about his homeland's cuisine. "If you ever visit Mexico, you'll be spoiled by the delicious food. For a long time, I made the mistake of eating dishes that were wonderful to taste — but not so good for my health," he says. Diagnosed with diabetes in his mid-40s, he admits he didn't always pay attention to his diet. "And I always struggled with tracking my glucose. I hated the finger pricks," he adds. "Together, my diabetes and high blood pressure slowly destroyed my kidneys."

Victor spent 30 years as an elementary, high school, and university educator and school administrator in Guadalajara, Mexico. When he retired in 2010, he moved his family to central Pennsylvania to teach at Vida Charter School, a bilingual school in Gettysburg. "The community was incredibly welcoming to us. This is an amazing, friendly place — a perfect choice to raise our family," he says.

In 2016, Victor was diagnosed with kidney disease and told he was at high risk for renal failure.

Two years later, he began peritoneal dialysis and retired from teaching in 2019. "I became very tired and depressed. I wanted to stop the dialysis but my wife kept me going," he says. "She's the reason I continued."

On Oct. 16, 2021, Victor received his first — and only — call to come to the hospital for a possible deceased-donor kidney. "It was a match and almost overnight, I felt like a new person," he says. "And I am so grateful for the gift of life my donor gave me. Although we never met, I pray for him and thank him every single day."

Victor has high praise for his transplant surgeon, Danielle Ladie, MD, and the UPMC Harrisburg Kidney Transplant Services team. "Their professionalism and the great compassion they have for their patients is amazing. I've never seen anything like it," he says. Victor also credits the team for getting him a permanent sensor to monitor and better regulate his blood sugar levels. He also dutifully measures his blood pressure every morning and night.

Today, one of Victor's favorite pastimes is to visit a creek near his home to relax and listen to the water. Occasionally, his grandchildren will join him; other times, he'll bring along his guitar to play. "In college, I was part of a small band of students who would serenade their girlfriends, just like they do in Spain," he says. "I played and sang for my girlfriend then — and after 44 years of marriage, we are still together."



OCTOBER 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9 INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY COLUMBUS DAY	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31 HALLOWEEN				

NOTES

BRYAN TURNER-BOWERS

Recipient • Age 36 • Middletown, Pa.

As a teenager, comic book enthusiast Bryan was diagnosed with focal segmental glomerulosclerosis. It's a rare disease in which scar tissue develops on the areas of the kidneys that filter waste from the blood.

"I went in for hemodialysis three times a week for almost 10 years," says Bryan. When it got to the point that he needed a transplant, his father volunteered to be tested and was a match to donate his kidney. Bryan, who was then 27, had the transplant in December 2013 in the Baltimore area where his family was living at the time. "I felt so good afterwards," says Bryan. "But I went into kidney failure about a month later and lost the new kidney."

He never gave up hope. "Over the next few years, I continued my dialysis treatments and worked to raise my spirits," says Bryan. "I got married. My wife is a real light for me. She gives me strength." Bryan decided to try again, but the medical center nearest his home in central Pennsylvania deemed he was not a candidate for a kidney transplant. "It worked out for the best, though," says Bryan. "My search led me to the UPMC Harrisburg kidney transplant program where I received the care and support I needed."

Because he'd been on dialysis for so long, Bryan was put close to the top of the transplant waiting list. His mother was being evaluated to be a living donor when a kidney from a deceased donor became available on Aug. 18, 2020. "What an unexpected thrill that was for my wife and me. I can't say enough good things about the transplant team at UPMC Harrisburg. They were extremely helpful, knowledgeable, and personable — before, during, and after my transplant," says Bryan.

"The surgeon told me the new kidney started working like clockwork right away. And I've been going strong ever since," adds Bryan. "Now, nearly two years later, I feel great. I'm doing everything in my power to keep the kidney healthy, taking my medications, listening to my doctors, and drinking a lot of water. I couldn't be more grateful. And I'm still enjoying comic books just as much as when I was a kid!"



NOVEMBER 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5 DAYLIGHT SAVING ENDS	6	7	8	9	10	11 VETERANS DAY
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23 THANKSGIVING DAY	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

NOTES

LINDA SYDORKO

Recipient • Age 71 • Lancaster, Pa.

Linda and Peter Sydorko celebrated 51 years of marriage in August 2022. The couple is blessed with four children and 10 grandchildren. "It's been a journey that is the joy of my life," says Linda. But her life could have been very different.

"I was born eight weeks premature with severe kidney function complications," says Linda. "During the first 10 years of my life, I was in and out of the hospital many times." She faced multiple corrective surgeries, including a temporary colostomy when she was just five years old.

Linda assumed her medical history meant she would never have children. "We were over the moon when I had a successful pregnancy and gave birth to our daughter in 1972 when I was 21," says Linda.

Shortly after delivering her daughter, Linda was diagnosed with vesicoureteral reflux, a condition in which urine flows backward from the bladder to one or both ureters and sometimes to the kidneys. While her doctor recommended surgery, she chose not to do so because the operation threatened her ability to have more children.

Major intestinal surgery in 1996 further compromised her kidneys. "It became clear that I'd need a kidney transplant at some future time," says Linda. In 2012, she met with the UPMC Harrisburg Kidney Transplant Services team. Since she wasn't immediately eligible for a kidney at that time, Linda was placed on inactive status, which still allowed her to be included on the transplant waiting list.

"I began home hemodialysis in 2019," says Linda. "I could never have done it without Peter. He was a willing partner in the treatments I needed five days a week." Linda was moved to the active transplant list in 2020.

On May 30, 2021, UPMC Harrisburg Kidney Transplant Services called with the news that they might have a deceased-donor kidney match. "We both started crying," remembers Linda. "I have a very high antibody count, so I honestly never expected to get that phone call." Just 24 hours later at 2 a.m. on Memorial Day, Linda received her new kidney. "The UPMC transplant team — office staff, nurses, doctors — are like family. They took a personal interest in me and played a life-changing role in my transplantation," she says. "I especially want to acknowledge Becca Brown, who is a transplant nurse. She talked about the transplant with me, but also about what my life was like and about me."

"I couldn't be more grateful for such a wonderful team. And I thank God for this gift from the donor and pray the family takes comfort knowing their loved one lives on in me."



DECEMBER 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7 FIRST DAY OF HANUKKAH NATIONAL PEARL HARBOR REMEMBRANCE DAY	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15 LAST DAY OF HANUKKAH	16
17	18	19	20	21 FIRST DAY OF WINTER	22	23
24 CHRISTMAS EVE	25	26	27	28	29	30
31 NEW YEAR'S EVE	CHRISTMAS DAY	KWANZAA				

NOTES
