

Rod Ellis to receive kidney from former HHS classmate Clay Warren

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

For over seven years Rod Ellis, formerly of Holyoke, has known he would eventually need a new liver. Knowing in advance, however, didn't make it any easier when he received the news from his nephrologist that he needed to begin looking for a living donor.

In February 2002 Ellis was diagnosed with Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD). The disease causes cysts to grow inside the kidney, slowing, and eventually stopping, kidney function. November 2008 Ellis and his wife Melodee began the tedious search for a willing person with a compatible blood type.

With many donation cases, close family is the best option for finding a match. Unfortunately, PKD is a genetic disease, ruling out Ellis's family as donors. This led the couple on a search to find a donor elsewhere.

Ellis now lives in Aurora, but his search went nationwide. In an April letter to the editor in the Enterprise he shared his story with his hometown community. He and his family and friends also got the word out via emails and facebook, hoping to find the answer to their prayers.

Two individuals contacted Ellis as prospective donors, but were declined. Although it was difficult for the Ellises to see their options turned away, they did not give up hope. Clay Warren, who graduated from Holyoke High School with Ellis in 1978, had heard about Ellis's need for a new kidney and contacted the family.

Warren is currently a youth minister in Puyallup, Wash. After prayer and discussion with his family, he knew he had made the right decision, and began to prepare for a kidney transplant. The process began in June with tests at Presbyterian/St. Luke's Medical Center (PSL) in Denver. On Aug. 12 he had his final test in Washington.

The transplant team met Aug. 19 to make their final decision about the surgery. Warren notified Ellis of their verdict with a text message reading, "Hey, I was wondering if you would like to get together sometime? Maybe play golf or have lunch or better yet, how about surgery." Ellis and his family were overjoyed at the news.

Rod Ellis to receive kidney from former HHS classmate Clay Warren

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Now with the transplant date approved and set, Ellis and Warren are ready and waiting for their surgeries. The procedure will be completed at PSL on Sept. 3. Warren will have one of his kidneys removed to give to Ellis, and each will function with one kidney. Ellis is indescribably grateful for Warren's decision to donate. It is an 'extended gift of life,' said Ellis, to both him and his family.