An article published in the Holyoke Enterprise in February titled “Increase in organ donors,” caught my attention. This article talked about the increase of lives saved through the Donor Alliance program. The people who donated their organs/tissue through the Donor Alliance are identified by the “heart” symbol found on their driver’s license or ID.

This a very generous program but organs are in short supply and it could take up to three years or more for a person to find a compatible organ. There is also a great need for living donations for people in need of a kidney transplant. (The reason for this letter.)

In February 2002, I was diagnosed with a kidney disease called Polycystic Kidney Disease, PKD, where cysts grow inside the kidney, causing the kidney function to decrease and eventually stop. This past November my nephrologist told me it was time to start looking for a living donor.

Even though my wife and I knew this was part of our future, we asked each other “Where do we begin looking for a living donor?” Those who are related to me make the most successful donors because their blood and tissues are similar to mine. Unfortunately PKD is a genetic disease making my immediate family unable to be a living donor.

People are usually born with two kidneys but can function normally with only one kidney. With the disease I have, both of my kidneys are affected. By finding a live donor it would give me a longer life expectancy and my body has a better chance of not rejecting the transplanted kidney since the transplant team at Presbyterian/St. Luke’s Medical Center in Denver are able to do extensive testing on the prospective donor since they are living.

To be a living donor you must be between the ages of 18-60, your blood type must be compatible. For me that would be a person with “A or 0” blood type. The donor also needs to be in good health and free of high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney disease or cancer. A complete medical history and physical examination would need to be completed. All testing is paid for by my health insurance company.

Holyoke is the community that my wife and I grew up in. After reading this letter, if anyone would like to be considered as a living kidney donor, or wants more information on the live donor kidney transplant process, I would like the opportunity to talk to you. The live donation of a kidney would be considered an extended gift of life for me, as well as my family.

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Rod Ellis