

Ohio letter carrier donates kidney to branch president's son

The president of an NALC branch might ask a fellow branch member to work as a volunteer, become a steward or run for branch office. Seldom does a branch president ask a letter carrier for a kidney.

But Dayton, OH Branch 182 member **Mike Miller** decided to offer one of his kidneys when he learned that his branch president, **John Oross**, was searching for a donor to help his adult son Jeremy, whose kidneys were failing.

The subject came up when Miller noticed Oross' mood. "He just seemed melancholy," Miller said. The letter carrier asked his branch president what was wrong, and Oross explained

that Jeremy had polycystic kidney disease (PKD).

PKD is an inherited disorder in which clusters of cysts—noncancerous sacs of fluid—develop primarily within the kidneys. As the cysts grow, kidney function drops and, in some cases, the kidneys fail entirely, requiring either a lifetime of dialysis or a donated kidney.

Oross told Miller he was struggling to find a kidney donor for his son. Jeremy needed a donor who had the same blood type, O-positive, since a kidney from any other donor would be rejected. Oross couldn't donate a kidney to his son because he has a different blood type. His wife and other children couldn't donate because they also have PKD—his wife, in fact, had also received a donated kidney transplant. (Fortunately, his other children's PKD symptoms aren't as severe.)

Miller didn't hesitate. "I have O-positive blood," he told Oross. "Can I sign up to see if I can donate?"

He didn't hesitate either when, after a screening process, he learned he was a match for Jeremy.

Jeremy and he underwent surgery in April to remove Miller's left kidney and use it to replace one of Jeremy's faulty ones.

Both are recovering well and Jeremy's new kidney is working fine.

Though most kidney donations come from family members, that wasn't a concern for Miller. "John is a union brother," he said. "I think we should be like family."

Still, Miller said he is the type of person who would help anyone in need. "I just felt like I was doing the right thing," he said. "If my kid needed the same thing, I'd want someone to step up. So I stepped up."

Miller used the administrative leave the U.S. Postal Service provides for organ donors, and then some sick leave. Though he was discharged after two nights in the hospital and his recovery was steady, carrying mail isn't a desk job, so it took a few weeks more for him to get well enough to go back to work.

"For 52 years old, I feel good," he said as he neared the end of his recovery. "It really isn't as hard as people think." The doctors told him he should expect no long-term effects of the surgery or from living with one fewer kidney.

"As president, I could not be prouder of Mike," Oross said, "and as a father, I simply cannot express in words the deep gratitude that I feel."

The first successful organ donation from a living person occurred in 1954 when Ronald Herrick gave one of his kidneys to his twin brother, Richard. Because they were identical twins, rejection of the foreign kidney by Richard's immune system was not a problem, but it took several more years for researchers to find ways to prevent rejection safely in patients receiving organs.

While many organ donations come from people who have recently died, a living donor can safely give up a kidney, a lobe of a lung, or a portion of the liver, pancreas, or intestines.

According to Donate Life America, a non-profit organization that promotes organ donation, almost 124,000 people are currently waiting for a donor to provide a vital organ. The Postal Service provides up to 14 days of administrative leave for employees who donate an organ. You can register to be an organ, eye and tissue donor at donatelife.net. **PR**



Branch 182 President John Oross (r) and his son Jeremy Razor (c) received quite the gift when Branch 182 member Mike Miller (l) donated one of his kidneys to Jeremy.