

Letter carrier donates kidney to stranger

It was July 2024 when Mid-Michigan Branch 256 letter carrier **Tara Marsh** saw the Facebook post shared by a friend of a friend about a man named Jared who needed a kidney. He was 29 when the Facebook post was made and had been struggling with kidney disease since he was only 15 years old. He had zero function in either of his kidneys, so his only option was to undergo dialysis for eight hours every night for years.

“It definitely really affected his life,” Marsh said. “He wasn’t really able to live like a young man. He had to live like an old man. He couldn’t drink. He couldn’t go do anything fun. He couldn’t stay out late because he had to be hooked up to this machine by a certain time.”

Marsh’s heart went out to him, so after work the same day she saw the post, she went to get tested to see if she matched.

“There was literally zero thought process,” the five-year letter carrier said. “This dude needs a kidney.”

Marsh, a mother of four, had given of her body for charity before—she had donated her eggs to a cancer survivor who was unable to conceive due to the side effects of her treatment, after Marsh heard her story on TV.

In the case involving the kidney transplant, a week after getting tested, she found out that she was a potential match. At that point, the hospital sent her paperwork with information on what exactly the process would entail. She reached out to Jared through Facebook Messenger, finding his account through a tag in the post she saw. They talked almost daily throughout the testing process, though never in person.

Although there are months of testing that potential kidney donors must go through before being eligible to do-

nate, Marsh had a feeling that it would work out.

“When [a nurse] was taking [my blood], I was like, I know I’m gonna be it,” Marsh said. “So, when they told me I was a match, I already knew it.”

She underwent extensive testing from July to October of 2024. In those four months, more than 100 vials of her blood were taken, and she spent multiple two-day testing sessions at University of Michigan hospital, which is located two hours from her home.

Despite Marsh’s optimism, Jared didn’t feel the same way. After years of potential matches not working out, “he did not have any positivity about any of this actually happening, because he had had kidney disease for so long and nothing ... good ever happened,” the carrier said. “So, until we pretty much had a surgery date, he wasn’t really believing anything that I was saying. He was just trying to be realistic so he didn’t get his hopes up ... because [he thought] at any point I could drop out.”

On Jan. 29, the day Marsh’s kidney would be removed and transplanted inside Jared, Marsh had arrived at the hospital earlier and saw Jared in line to check in, but she didn’t have time to talk to him with everything that was going on. Marsh wasn’t anxious or nervous, she said: “The best thing I can compare it to is if you see somebody drowning and you just help them, there’s no thought process.”

Marsh said that after the surgery, her recovery took about three months, but 10 months later she still feels effects from having her kidney removed. She still gets dehydrated easily, which is something she has to watch out for, being a letter carrier.

“It was a lot harder than they told me it was going to be,” she said. “It

Tara Marsh



was bad. It wasn’t an easy recovery. It hurt a lot. They wouldn’t give me anything for pain. ... I couldn’t drive and I couldn’t really walk. I couldn’t do anything. I couldn’t take care of my kids. It was rough.”

Despite her state after the surgery, she says she was still “100 percent” satisfied with her decision to help.

“They said that the kidney started working immediately for him,” Marsh said. “When we went in, he was very gray—very, very gray—and his body was very acidic. ... By the time he woke up, he had his color back.”

Marsh and Jared remain friends to this day—often communicating over the phone and have met three times in person. **PR**