

The Herald-Palladium

Hartford transplant recipient celebrates five-year 'kidney-versary' with son

Mother's Day takes on extra meaning for mother, son

By HP STAFF May
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Margo Klug of Hartford sits with her son Kevin Klug, who donated one of his kidneys to her five years ago. They celebrate every May, with this being their five-year "kidneyversary."

HARTFORD — Five years ago on May 1, just in time for Mother’s Day that year, Kevin Klug, a civil engineer from Waterford Township, gave his mom the precious gift of life – and an actual part of himself.

He donated a kidney to his mom, Margo Klug, 67, of Hartford and the two now celebrate their “kidney-versary” in May every year.

“It’s a gift I can never really repay him for,” Margo Klug told the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan.

The day after the transplant, she named her kidney, “The Whiz Kid,” since she received it from her 32-year-old “kid” and it started working right away.

Thanks to her son, Margo Klug can still work on the family farm with her husband, Dan, where they grow apples and peaches.

“I can farm, play with the grandkids and live life to the fullest,” she said. “For me, it has been a remarkable journey. Because I had a living donor, I did not have to go on dialysis.”

In the early 2000s, Margo Klug’s doctor told her that her blood pressure was high and started her on medication. Not long after, her kidney function decreased and a nephrologist told her she was in stage 4 kidney disease.

In 2014, even after trying to improve her health with better nutrition and physical activity, her kidney function worsened.

“If you need a kidney, I want to give you one,” Kevin Klug said after he knew about her illness. “I had done some research on kidney donation when it became clear that my mom’s kidney function was decreasing despite her best efforts. There was little to no long-term risk for me and potential significant increases in mom’s quality of life by her not going on dialysis. The surgery pain for a few weeks for me was not a concern.”

Margo Klug was evaluated at Michigan Medicine and accepted into their transplant program.

Kevin Klug, Margo’s youngest son, said he was determined to find a living donor for his mom if they didn’t match.

As she researched kidney disease, Margo Klug found the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan (NKFM).

“I will always be thankful to the National Kidney Foundation and the NKFM for being such excellent resources during my kidney disease to kidney transplant journey,” she said.

In January 2015, Kevin Klug learned that he needed to lose 30 pounds to be his mom’s donor. In March, after working hard to lose the weight, he asked his mom, “When do you want your kidney?” She was proud of her son for losing the weight and optimistically said, “May 1.”

By late March, her kidney function had dropped lower. She felt tired and cold all the time. Looking back, she said that her thinking was fuzzy, food tasted awful, and she had a bad taste in her mouth.

As the day of the transplant drew closer, Margo made Kevin a little kidney out of scrap yarn and surprised him with it.

“Wanna trade?” she had asked.

After a successful transplant, she began volunteering as a kidney transplant peer mentor, supporting others through their transplant journeys. She also visits dialysis centers to talk about transplants.

“There’s a lot of misinformation out there,” she said. “I tell people that my kidney disease was due to high blood pressure. I still have chronic kidney disease – I just had a transplant as a treatment.”

This May, the Klug extended family will miss the NKFM Kidney Walk at the Detroit Zoo, currently postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. They hope to attend the rescheduled in-person walk on Aug. 23 or do the virtual walk that is also being offered. For more information about the walk, visit nkfm.org/walks.

“With our family being directly affected by kidney disease, and benefiting from NKFM help, we are glad to give back and help bring awareness and funding to continue the good work,”

Kevin Klug said. “The timing of the walk each year is so close to the anniversary of when the kidney transplant for my mom happened, so it also is a celebration for us. Margo Klug echoed that sentiment.

“It’s a way to give back and it’s really important. The walk is so critical for anyone battling kidney disease because lots of time you are the only one you know with it,” she said.

