

## Kidney transplant leads to kinship

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Dan Overcash and Donnie Hagler have a bond that runs deep. Hagler donated a kidney to Overcash after reading a church sign saying that Overcash needed a life-saving transplant.

### The beginning

In the summer of 2017, Overcash's church, Peachland United Methodist, posted a sign that said he was in need of a kidney transplant. Two weeks later, Hagler drove through Peachland to see how it had changed since he owned an auto repair shop there -- Double D Auto Repair. That's when he saw the church sign, and the public plea for help.

"I just felt like I needed to do it ... I kinda knew a little bit of the history on what he had been going through, healthwise. He had gone through a lot. I knew he needed all the help he could get," Hagler said.

Hagler knew Overcash; he was a customer of Hagler's at the auto shop.

"God's got a plan for everybody," Hagler said. "He sent me down a path then sent Dan down a path where we would meet someday and I would be able to donate the kidney."

"When you look at what's the odds of Donnie going through Peachland that day, out of the blue and then him seeing that sign -- we just got the sign put up at the church a couple weeks before that -- for him to see it, for him to pursue the avenue of the process of doing it, for him to be a near match and then for him to wait as long as he did," Overcash said, referring to how their story is less coincidental and more likely divinely orchestrated.

Soon after Hagler read the church sign he requested information on kidney transplants and applied to be Overcash's donor. Overcash did not know that Hagler applied to be his donor, but knew that he had a match.

"It was a shock," Overcash said when asked about his initial reaction to learning that he had a match for a kidney. He said Donnie called him shortly after to let Overcash know that he would be the donor.

### From THE FRONT PAGE

According to Overcash, the men were nearly a perfect match.

"To know that Donnie is the one ... Anybody could have been a donor and I would have been pleased, but I was even more pleased with Donnie only because I think it's just amazing that a person would donate a kidney. Absolutely amazing," Overcash said.

Overcash and Hagler consider their story rare.

Hagler said most people don't think about being an organ donor, other than when they get their driver's license (in the event of a fatal accident).

"You don't have to be dead to donate an organ," Hagler said.

Hagler said throughout the process leading up to the surgery, not once did he doubt his decision.

When the surgery took place at Atrium Health's Carolina Medical Center in Charlotte, on April 19, 2018, Overcash was 66 years old and Hagler was 48 years old.

Overcash and Hagler both said they were not nervous about the surgery.

"I knew I was going to be taken care of," Hagler said, referring to both the medical team and God watching over him. He spent three days in the hospital saying it was, "tough, but not terrible." He was told by doctors that the sooner he could get out of bed, walk and use the restroom, the sooner he could go home.

He said the first week after the surgery was the toughest. He was able to go back to work on "light duty." He said his employer, Chesterfield County Public Works, helped him through the process. He hadn't worked there long before needing to take six weeks off for recovery. Hagler said some of his colleagues donated their sick and vacation time to him.

## Tumultuous health

Overcash said he felt at ease because the staff at Atrium's Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Center were "professional and personable."

Overcash needed a kidney transplant, because in the fall of 2013, he was diagnosed with IgA Nephropathy and was told he was in stage four (out of five) ESRD or End Stage Renal Disease.

He said he woke up one morning to go to work at AllState Insurance in Charlotte and could feel that his blood pressure was elevated. He checked it with a monitor at home. His feeling was right -- it was unusually high.

He called his primary care physician, Dr. Daniel Campo at Union Family Practice in Monroe, and asked if they could see him.

After doing blood work, it was determined that Overcash had a kidney problem. He was given a high dose of Prednisone, which he took until April of 2014. Prednisone caused steroid induced myopathy, which causes muscle weakness. He was rushed to the CMC Union emergency room in Monroe.

He said prior to that day, he did not feel any symptoms that could have tipped him off that something was wrong with his kidneys.

"It hit me like a ton of bricks," Overcash said.

After a few days at CMC Union, his condition worsened so rapidly he was airlifted to CMC Pineville, where his condition continued to deteriorate. He spent weeks intubated on a ventilator in a medically-induced coma. His family was told he had three organs in failure -- kidneys, heart and lungs -- and that he had less than a 20 percent chance to live.

He also suffered from pcp pneumonia, sepsis, staph and c-diff. His condition was so dire, palliative doctors were called in to consult with his family."

He spent a month at CMC Pineville, then was transported to Carolinas Specialty Hospital where he spent another month. He eventually improved enough to be moved to Liberty Healthcare and Rehabilitation - The Pavilion at Brightmore, where he stayed for another three months.

On September 15, 2014, after nearly six months of hospitals and rehabilitation centers, Overcash was finally able to go home. He was still in a wheelchair when he began physical therapy at home.

According to the timeline that was kept, "during the five and a half months of hospitalization and rehab, he had to endure numerous life-saving emergency procedures to include the placement of a chest tube with no anesthesia."

Between 2015 and 2016, Overcash went through the process of being placed on a kidney transplant list at the Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Center. In Feb. 16, 2017, he started hemodialysis three times a week. In April of the same year, he received the kidney transplant.

## Power of Prayer

Overcash's and Hagler's Christian faith is evident and something they freely share with others.

Overcash said he appreciates the many people who have prayed about his health and well-being.

Both men, and their families, said they prayed about Hagler's decision to donate a kidney and they prayed that Overcash's body would accept it.

Their names made the prayer lists of many churches across the Carolinas.

Overcash admitted that in the beginning, his wife had more faith that he would heal. He said this experience has "built his faith that much more."

Overcash said one day when recovering at the rehabilitation facility, he was in excruciating pain that could not be tamed with medicine. His physical therapist tried to get him out of bed and moving. He said he prayed to God for relief and not 30 seconds passed before he felt the pain leave his body. He said that was the first time he had been able to get out of the bed on his own.

"You know, some people believe in prayer; I'm sure some people don't," Overcash said. "But I believe in those doctors up there also. I believe in the medicine, but I look back and I can just see things happen that statistically... when you see that stuff and hear people that you don't even know talking about it... There's things that happen that you really don't have a reasonable explanation for."

"The thing about prayer, there's no prayer too small," Hagler said.

Hagler said he and Overcash still keep in contact and fish together at Overcash's pond.

They were "sort of friends" before the kidney donation, but they are "closer now," Halger said.

Contributed photo

Dan Overcash, left, might not be alive today if it wasn't for Donnie Hagler, who donated a kidney to Overcash in 2017. Hagler said he saw a church sign about Overcash needing a kidney transplant, and felt compelled to see if he was a match. Hagler said he never second-guessed his decision to share an organ.

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