

Social Media Post Leads to Life-Saving Surgery for Veteran

INDIANAPOLIS, July 6, 2016 [/PRNewswire-USNewswire/](#) -- While many of us are recovering from a long weekend celebrating our nation's independence, one warrior is returning to work after giving part of himself to save a life. Andrew Coughlan gives of himself every day in his job at Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP). He helps wounded veterans and their families in their healing process. Recently, though, he went even further, donating his kidney to a fellow Army veteran in need.

Andrew volunteered to give his kidney to Russell Broughton after seeing a post on social media. Russell said he turned to Facebook as a last-ditch effort. Doctors diagnosed Russell with Focal Segmental Glomerulosclerosis (FSGS) in 2013. Mayo Clinic describes FSGS as the development of scar tissue on parts of the kidneys. Those scars impair functionality, causing less blood to be filtered.

When Russell first learned his diagnosis, he worried about spending the rest of his life hooked up to machines. His treatment started with those machines for dialysis – they do the work of his kidneys, processing unwanted water and waste out of his blood. It worked at first, and even helped Russell lose weight.

"I felt like a million bucks," Russell said. "I lost 30 pounds in three days because of how much fluid was in my body."

After just two months, his dialysis increased to three days a week and more than four hours a day. Even then, the effectiveness of the treatment waned.

"After treatment, you are exhausted, deal with headaches, and are just beat down," Russell said. "After the first year, I just wasn't the husband and father I once was."

That is when Russell decided to seek help on social media.

"I posted my diagnosis on Facebook. I felt this was the best way to find a donor so I could be the man I once was."

The move was a tough one for Russell.

"Like many infantrymen and warriors, pride is huge. I never wanted pity or sympathy. I needed off dialysis. My marriage was struggling; I had no other alternative."

Help did come – but from an unlikely source.

"Andrew and I served together in Iraq, but we were in separate platoons and never interacted that much."

"As soon as I saw the Facebook post, I decided to help if I could," Andrew said. "I wasn't even sure I would be a match or be eligible to donate, but I would never know if I didn't make a phone call."

Andrew quietly called to check, and within a couple of weeks, he learned he was a match.

"I had to talk to my wife, Ashley, about this," Andrew said. "She knows I would help anybody, but I knew she would have her worries and questions."

"When he told me he was a match, I was so grateful and could not believe this was becoming a possibility," Russell said.

More than just a possibility, Russell and Andrew underwent surgery in late May, two years after Russell first started dialysis. Russell's body accepted the new kidney and immediately put the organ to work. He is on the mend, and is able to live life without being hooked to machines. Andrew returned to work, still sore from surgery, but ready to continue giving back to warriors.

About Wounded Warrior Project

The mission of Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) is to honor and empower Wounded Warriors. WWP's purpose is to raise awareness and to enlist the public's aid for the needs of injured service members, to help injured servicemen and women aid and assist each other, and to provide unique, direct programs and services to meet their needs. WWP is a national, nonpartisan organization headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida. To get involved and learn more, visit <https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/>.

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