



Gifts... We give and receive them. Some big, some small. They come in all shapes and sizes. Gifts are an expression of love - whether for someone you care about, a friend, a stranger or a donation to local charity. It feels good to give and receive.

Hi! I'm Paul Lalonde. My wife Annette and I have owned a furniture store in North Bay since 1987, now known as The Brick. Already, Christmas music is playing in the store and Annette has started shopping for gifts for our grandchildren.

This holiday is extra special for me and my family as I will be receiving the gift of a lifetime... a new kidney.

Our hospital has always been important to our family – it is why we have donated and sponsored many projects and events over the years. Now, it is my lifeline.

While vacationing with Annette in Florida in 2018, I came down with a serious infection that resulted in sepsis. It attacked my major organs causing renal failure and a massive heart attack among other complications. After 22 days in ICU, we returned home to North Bay. My health was still extremely fragile.

Once home, I immediately started renal replacement therapy (dialysis) at North Bay Regional Health Centre. I was placed on the transplant list for a kidney and pancreas. While I waited, I received dialysis three times a week. I am so grateful this service is available in our community, close to home.

It wasn't long before we received the call we had been waiting for – they had a kidney and pancreas for me. Annette and I travelled to Toronto. Only 45 minutes before surgery, it was cancelled – one of the organs wasn't viable. It was devastating news. We returned to North Bay to await the next call.

Two more times we received a call, and two more times the transplants were cancelled.

After further cardiac complications in 2019 and surgical delays due to COVID, I underwent quadruple bypass surgery in May 2020. I was told I could go back on the transplant list following six months of healing. That would not be the case.



So many surgeries were put on hold due to the pandemic and the transplant list was getting longer. The list is triaged according to a patient's best chances for survival. I was no longer considered a candidate for a double transplant.

The only option remaining was to find a living donor for a kidney transplant. I am so grateful for both of my stepdaughters, Jenna and Michelle, who stepped forward as potential donors. After some intensive screening Jenna was identified as a match and surgery is expected to take place late December or early January. This is the greatest gift my stepdaughter could ever give to me. It is truly a gift of a life – my life.



Until then, I continue to receive life-saving renal dialysis three times a week at NBRHC. I will continue to be monitored and cared for by the staff in the Renal Unit for some time after my transplant. Over the last three years, the staff and fellow patients have become a second family.

Renal Dialysis is a busy program, currently operating at 100% capacity and the demand is expected to grow by 24% during the next ten years. Last year, more than 9,000 treatments were provided at NBRHC.

To meet the increasing demand, our Health Centre is adding three addition dialysis stations and planning an expansion of the Renal Unit so they can continue to provide the best care locally. The expansion will cost \$400,000.

This life-saving program inspired my family and The Brick North Bay to make a \$25,000 donation towards this important project. This care area will continue to have an impact on my family for the rest of my life.

As you make your shopping list for your loved ones this holiday season, please consider including a gift for your community and hospital. Simply fill out the enclosed donation form and mail it back! Or you can visit www.nbrhcfoundation.ca/renal to make your donation online. Your gift will save and change the lives of renal patients in our community.

Please give generously this holiday season.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas.

Paul Lalonde

Patient & Owner, The Brick North Bay

P.S. I am challenging our collective community to match my family's \$25,000 donation. Together we can double... maybe even triple the impact we can have on the Renal Unit expansion and save lives, just like mine.

