Helping Out a Friend

**Article**

Lexile 810



AP Photo/Sarah Conard

*Michael A. Moore lost 50 pounds in order to donate his kidney to his friend.*

**HILLSBORO, MONTANA** (Achieve3000, May 4, 2008). In 2006, Stephen Gottschalk felt weak. He was not sleeping well and began feeling itchy all over his body. These are both signs of kidney disease. The 50-year-old Gottschalk, from Montana, had Alport Syndrome. This is a condition that can lead to kidney failure. That year, Gottschalk had to begin dialysis. Dialysis removes poisons that build up in the body. It performs the job of the failing kidneys. But, Gottschalk knew, dialysis wasn't a long-term answer.

The best answer was for Gottschalk to undergo a kidney transplant. In a kidney transplant, a healthy kidney is removed from another person—a kidney donor. It is then placed into the patient. (People are generally born with two kidneys, but the human body needs only one.) Oftentimes, the donor is a family member. Family members are more likely to be a "match." This means that the kidney is more likely to be accepted by the patient's body. But kidney disease runs in Gottschalk's family. So none his relatives could be donors.

In 2007, Gottschalk received a call from a buddy, Michael A. Moore. Without being asked, Moore volunteered to give one of his kidneys to his longtime friend.

Gottschalk and Moore became friends in middle school. The friendship grew stronger when the two played together on their high school football team. They both took part in weekend rodeos and hung out with the same group of friends. They even started their careers together in the 1970s. First, they worked for a construction company. Later, the pair drove a truck together.

Later, Moore and his family moved to Indiana. Gottschalk and his family remained in Montana. But the two visited each other a few times each year.

Moore's first attempt to help his friend was unsuccessful. But it was fortunate in regard to his own health. Doctors informed Moore that he was pre-diabetic and therefore was not able to be a donor.

But the 51-year-old Moore was determined to help his friend. He decided to lose weight in order to become a donor. First, he began eating healthier. He shed about 25 pounds. Then, his weight loss leveled off. So he increased his efforts by beginning an exercise plan, which included bike riding. Moore had dropped 50 pounds. Doctors said he could be Gottschalk's kidney donor.

In April 2008, the two friends underwent a successful six-hour transplant operation. Both men recovered quickly. Today, both Gottschalk and Moore remain healthy.

Moore recorded his experience of losing weight and recovering from the operation in video clips. He has posted the videos on the Internet. The videos served not only to lift Gottschalk's spirits while he waited for the kidney transplant. They also, according to hospital officials, helped to educate the public about being an organ donor.

It's clear, said Gottschalk, that his friend saved his life, and he is grateful for it. "It's hard to describe in words," he said.

Moore, in return, said that Gottschalk has given him the motivation to improve his own health.

*The Associated Press contributed to this story.*

**Dictionary**

|  |
| --- |
| **pre-diabetic** *(adjective)*    likely to develop a serious disease called diabetes; people with diabetes experience increased levels of sugar in the blood |
| **donor** *(noun)*    person who gives something to help others |
| **genetic** *(adjective)*    having to do with genes, information in living things that determines how they grow |
| **transplant** *(noun)*    an operation in which someone is given a new organ such as a liver or a kidney |