

Telling the Alfred University story: Fiat Generous Spirits!

1/24/18



Russ Kohler '20 donates his bone marrow to help a 51-year-old man.

Today, somewhere, there are two people who likely have developed a penchant for purple and gold. Those two people have had their lives changed because of the incredible generosity of two members of our Alfred University community.

Russ Kohler '20, an athletic training major from Seaford, New York, is a defensive lineman on our football team. Earlier this year, Russ and several of his teammates signed up to participate in the “[Be the Match](#)” program. Their DNA was entered into a database to see if it would match any of the people waiting for a bone marrow transplant, a procedure that is used to treat blood cancers like leukemia or lymphoma; bone marrow diseases like aplastic anemia; and other immune system or genetic diseases like sickle cell anemia.

Russ received a call mid-way through the fall semester, just after a football game, advising him that he was a match. “I found the decision a very easy one to make,” Russ said. “I wanted to donate to help this person from the moment I was a match. I just had to convince my mother it was a safe procedure.”

[Russ Kohler's story on GoSaxons.com](#)

During winter break, Russ made two trips to New York City for additional preparatory medical testing. “Once I was cleared, I began receiving injections to boost the amount of platelets in my body,” he said. A few days ago, Russ made the donation (wearing his Saxon Nation shirt!), a process that took six hours. “I was hooked up to a machine that would draw blood from one arm, take the platelets and then return the blood back into my arm.” Russ knows that the recipient of his bone marrow is a 51-year-old man with non-Hodgkins lymphoma.

And in true Alfred University fashion, Russ said, “If I had the opportunity to do it again, I would without hesitation.”

Mary Theresa Sick—better known as MT and the capable administrative assistant to Vice President for Student Affairs Kathy Woughter—is also a recent medical donor.

MT learned in August that a good friend was in Stage IV renal failure and needed a transplant. “I didn’t even think about it. I contacted the donor center the next day,” said MT. “The process is a bit overwhelming and long story short, she happened to find a match just before I was to begin testing” to become a donor. The friend, however, told MT about three other people in the area—all from her hometown—who also needed a kidney transplant. “One was another friend of mine who hadn’t told anyone, including her family, of her condition until recently. She was in Stage V renal failure. I told her I had already started the process and would like to continue with her to see if I was a match.”

After a whirlwind and arduous series of required tests, made all the more complicated by the fact that her return travel from a holiday vacation was disrupted by a winter storm that shut down air travel along much of the Eastern seaboard, MT found out she was a match. The hand-assisted laparoscopic surgery, a week ago, took four hours. The thrill for MT came when she learned that when her kidney was transplanted, “It began working immediately.” While the recipient has to be monitored closely to make sure she doesn’t reject the kidney, “Everything looks great so far!” MT’s recovery is four to six weeks.

While MT is not an alumna, she’s the mother of one, Bryan Sick ’04, who is married to Bonnie Ye ’07, and definitely a Saxon, through and through.

Please join me in acknowledging Russ Kohler and MT Sick for the spirit of generosity and kindness that they have displayed and how aptly they thus epitomize the caring nature of our Alfred University community.

Fiat Generous Spirits!

Mark