FAMILY

Act of Kindness: Former College Roommate Donates a Part of His Liver to Save His Friend

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These college roommates haven't seen each other for 21 years; however, one of them, Steven Robinson, while on a family trip to Detroit, realized he was within a driving distance of Richard Koonce who was his roommate and best friend in his college days.

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He called him to ask if he could come over and visit.

Koonce introduced Robinson to his wife Natalie. They all attended Norfolk State University, a historically Black college in Virginia. When his friend contacted him, he welcomed the couple and their three kids to

their home in Sandusky, Ohio.

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Robinson said it felt really good to see his former roommate after two decades. But, what took him by surprise was Koonce's major weight loss.

Robinson Finds Out Koonce Has Been Diagnosed with a Rare Liver Disease

During a private moment, Robinson asked Koonce if he was okay and what's been going on.

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Koonce wasn't okay because he had been diagnosed with a rare liver illness known as PSC. This disease scars the bile ducts and contributes to tumors, infections, and may even lead to serious liver failure.

Koonce didn't plan on telling Robinson about his condition; however, since he asked, he also told him how he had tried out plenty of treatments, but none of them worked. He was trying to find a living donor for a transplant.

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The donor would need to give only a part of his liver because this organ is capable of self-regeneration. The donor's liver will also grow back afterward.

Robinson Decides to Help Out His Friend & Offers to Be a Donor

Robinson said that he has to do something and didn't hesitate for a second. Koonce was amazed by Robinson's gesture. He offered to donate a part of his liver to extend his buddy's life.

He discussed it with his wife Natalie on their ride home to Teaneck, New Jersey. She immediately supported him and they met with their three kids and told them about their plan. All supported their Dad to help out his friend.

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Koonce had shared the news of his condition with several of his friends but said he couldn't ask any of them to be donors. Still, he told them that if this was something they want to do, he'll give them

the information.

Marion, Koonce's wife offered to be a donor as well as their daughter Morgan. But, Robinson had the same blood type and was also a more suitable physical match. Koonce who's 62 said that Robinson is a special man who offered to do this for him.

Koonce is a college prep director and head of the girls' basketball team for the Sandusky Public Schools.

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According to Robinson, he looks at the situation a bit differently and it was a spiritual thing for him. He's always felt a special love for his friend and was aware that something wasn't right and he saw it in his eyes.

This living donor transplant will be added to the small number of Black patients in America who've undergone it.

According to statistics, Blacks are the largest minority group in need of organ transplants. 83.6 percent of the organs from Blacks in 2020 were from deceased donors while only 16.4 percent came from living donors compared to the 33.4 percent of white living donors.

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The importance of living donors is huge because there's a lack of organs. When you have a living donator, a person won't have to compete with the hundreds of thousands of people in the area on the list.

The risk of dying from disease while waiting on the list will be decreased; however, doctors say there's a need of increasing awareness about organ donation and offer education to people.

Sources:

NBC

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