Kidney donation from wife is latest gift for man battling medical challenges

They say that when you get married, you share a life together. For Town of Fredonia resident Doug Davis, that reality has new meaning after his wife Barbara provided him with a life-saving kidney for a transplant Wednesday, Oct. 4.

“It’s the ultimate sacrifice for her. She’s always been my rock and has been there throughout my life,” Davis said.

“When you say your vows through thick and thin, she really meant it.”

The couple will celebrate their 27th wedding anniversary in January, but back in 1991 they thought they might never get past the first year because Davis was diagnosed with leukemia three months into their marriage. Davis was treated with a bone marrow transplant, but doctors discovered he only had one functioning kidney at birth.

Four years after his battle with leukemia, Davis was in for another fight for his life when a simple cold turned into a circulatory disease that cost him his limbs.

“With all the medications and illnesses I had throughout the years, I had a blood infection and lost all four of my limbs,” Davis said. “I lost both my legs below the knees and both my arms below the elbows.”

Davis didn’t let his amputations dictate how he wanted to spend the rest of his life, as he was able to renew his driver’s license, go deer hunting and play with his two children, David and Melissa. Davis was also able to continue his career as senior tool and dye designer at Manitou Group Americas in West Bend.

In 2012, his kidneys began to fail as a side effect from the medications he takes.

“I had stage 2 renal failure and keeping on with the years it’s gotten worse and worse,” Davis said, noting he began receiving dialysis three times a week in March after having pneumonia.

When Davis first learned his kidney was failing, he also discovered Barbara could become his future donor even though their blood types don’t match — Barbara is Type B and Davis is O.

“At the time, my kidney had kind of been on a roller coaster ride. One month it would look pretty good and then there would be a couple of months where the doctors would say I’d need to get a transplant,” Davis said. “We had to run a lot of tests to make sure the transplant will work and that she was healthy enough to undergo the procedure.”

Davis mentioned the procedure can be more taxing on the donor than the recipient, and both
will undergo a six to eight-week recovery.

“The doctors are telling me that I should feel pretty good after the surgery because I'll be gaining a kidney that's working after surviving over the years with a mediocre kidney," he said.

Another challenge the family will face is covering the cost of the medical expenses. According to Davis, anti-rejection drugs can cost up to $10,000 a month.

“It’s going to be really expensive for the first sixth months because you’re on a variety of medication,” he said. “After six months, they begin to wean you off certain medications but there will be a core of medication that will be around $1,000 a month, which I'll probably take for the rest of my life.”

To help cover the costs, the family has set up an online donation page with the National Foundation of Transplants called Team DDD, which stands for Dedicated, Devoted and Dad and also are his initials.

On Sunday, Oct. 8, the Northern Ozaukee School District will host a LuLaRoe Pop Up, a benefit sale that will feature women’s clothes. If sales reach $100, the company will match the donation.

The Ozaukee Lioness Club will also be at the event selling Sloppy Joes and baked goods.

When the Green Bay Packers play the Chicago Bears on Nov. 12, there will be fundraising party at the Boltonville Fire Department Hall, which will include a silent auction, raffle and pig and chicken roast.

“I'm looking forward to not having to take dialysis every other morning at 6 a.m. and getting my life kind of back to normal and going back to work full-time,” Davis said.