

August 30, 2017

Pat Dardano celebrates 32 years in business after receiving a kidney from a customer *Kidney March cherishes the generosity of those who give the gift of life*

They'd known each other for 20 years, with Randy Haatvedt regularly visiting Pat Dardano at his shoe shine business, *Pat's Place*, downtown. As the years went by, Randy saw Pat's health declining because of kidney disease. Pat was down to 15% kidney function – at 12% he would have to go on dialysis. "My blood is O negative, the universal donor, and I got thinking, maybe I could give Pat a kidney," says Randy. He wanted to do the transplant work-up anonymously so as not to get Pat's hopes up, but the process would not allow that. "When Randy came and told me what he wanted to do, I couldn't believe it," says Pat. "I went home and told my wife, she started crying."

"It was an amazing experience," Randy says. "We both had such a calm certainty – like it was meant to be." Pat received a kidney from Randy on July 11, 2012, and has been grateful for good health ever since. They have dinner on their transplant anniversary every year and Pat shares their story with restaurant staff and anyone who will listen. "I tell everyone, you see this man right here, he saved my life," Pat laughs.

A retired IT consultant, Randy has become a dedicated volunteer for The Kidney Foundation – doing Kidney March, a 100 kilometre walk from K-Country to Calgary – for the past four years. This year, and last, he sponsored a pit stop along the route. 300 Marchers and Crew are signed up for Kidney March 2017 which takes place September 8 – 10 in the Foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

Kidney Marchers include families, friends, kidney doctors, nurses, and social workers. Participants also include kidney donors, recipients, people waiting for a kidney, those on dialysis, and their loved ones. The only event of its kind in the world, Kidney March raises funds and awareness for life-changing research and support programs for people with kidney disease. This includes initiatives to boost organ donation and transplant rates. Last year, Kidney Marchers, Crew and Sponsors raised \$774,928. In its seven year history, Kidney March has raised more than \$5 million in the fight against kidney disease.

"There is an incredible spirit of generosity in our community," says Joyce Van Deurzen, Executive Director, The Kidney Foundation of Canada (Southern Alberta). "It brings tears to my eyes when I think about Randy. No one in his family has kidney disease. He just decided to step up, and give the ultimate gift – the gift of life."

Reporters are invited to attend Kidney March Day Zero on Thursday, September 7 at 2:30 pm at the Delta Calgary South, 135 Southland Drive SE, and **Kidney March Opening Ceremonies on Friday, September 8 at 7:00 am** at Millarville Racetrack, 306097 192 Street, Millarville, AB T0L 1K0

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