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## Portsmouth man to donate a kidney to his ailing daughter

By Arleen Spenceley  
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Courtesy photo

Ken Wingate poses with his daughters Anna, left, and Elizabeth, who is scheduled to receive his kidney. He was undergoing two days of testing at the University of Washington Medical Center, and they took a break to visit a museum.

### FUND-RAISING

Ken Wingate has started a gofundme site to raise money to help cover expenses from the kidney transplant:

<https://www.gofundme.com/dad-donates-kidney-to-daughter>

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Ken Wingate smiles while he talks about his daughter.

She's an extrovert. A devoted friend. A good person. What he always hoped she'd be.

But she needs a kidney, said Wingate, 58. And he is going to give her one.

"It's just what you do."

Elizabeth McClure is 33. She's the older of Wingate's two daughters. She lives in Port Orchard, Wash., with her husband, Colin, a sonar tech in the Navy.

Wingate decided to buy life insurance for McClure when she was 19. Before the coverage could start, medical tests were required. What the company said after the tests surprised her dad.

"We can't insure your daughter," he said.

The proteins in her blood didn't look right, and the company suspected drug use. "My daughter doesn't do drugs," Wingate said.

Further test results identified the problem: She has IgA nephropathy.

"It's a disease which sits inside your kidneys and eats the filtration cells away," he said.

McClure hadn't had any symptoms.

"It came as a total surprise," she said.

A nephrologist told her there isn't a cure, that she could manage it with medication. But he warned that if the disease got aggressive, "there was no stopping it," Wingate said.

McClure wasn't worried.

"When you're that young, you don't really think about it," she said.

But last year, the disease got aggressive.

"A lot of toxins start to build up in your body when your kidneys aren't working correctly," McClure said.

Eventually, her muscles weakened. Tasks of all sorts tired her out. She found it difficult to focus. Her kidneys functioned at 20 percent of normal capacity, and continued to decline.

By spring 2016, they functioned at eight percent. By July, she was on dialysis.

For three and a half hours, three days a week, a machine cleans her blood and puts it back into her body. Afterward, she sleeps.

"It's trying to do in three-and-a-half hours what your kidneys have a whole day to do," she said. "The blood is running through (your body) quickly."

How long a person can live on dialysis varies, she said. But the average is six years. A new kidney could add time to her life. So her dad offered one of his.

"You don't see your child going through this kind of thing and not do something when you can do it," he said.

His offer didn't surprise her.

"My dad has always been the kind of dad who would do absolutely anything for his daughters," she said. "I'm extremely grateful."

Wingate underwent blood tests that determined he's a match. Additional tests determined that he's fit to be a living donor.

He's learned what life will be like afterward.

Advil, which he usually takes for pain, will be out of the question. It's an NSAID (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug), and those are bad for your kidneys, he said. He also has to give up soda and change his diet to include foods that facilitate a kidney's health.

"And are not prone to create kidney stones, which now really become my enemy," he said. If he's ever rushed to the hospital, he'll have to announce right away that he has only one kidney.

And he can expect to be in pain after the surgery.

"My remaining kidney will grow a little bit," he said. "It's having to do what two kidneys used to do. There's going to be some discomfort and bloating."

His daughter has concerns, of course – and so does his surgeon.

He "looked at me and said, 'You're asking me to take a 58-year-old man that's perfectly healthy and make him unhealthy,' " Wingate said.

The doctors do that on purpose, he said. They need to know that donors grasp the magnitude of the donation.

"Obviously it didn't stop me," he said.

He has a new job for an audio, video and lighting company, but his employer is sensitive to his situation. So he'll fly to Washington on Sept. 22. The transplant is scheduled for Sept. 27 at the University of Washington Medical Center. Wingate will stay in the area long enough to make his Oct. 9 post-op appointment.

He is excited, he said, despite any risk. And he's quick to tell you why: "I love my daughter."

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