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MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Kidney transplant forges bond between donor and recipient

Vancouver, BC – Two years ago Vancouver model Savilla Kress received the gift of life – a donated kidney for transplant – from someone she hardly knew.

Today she calls the donor, Las Vegas-based performer and model Stephen McClelland, an angel and her hero.

“We have a special bond of friendship which can never be broken,” says Kress.

“Savilla and I are like brother and sister now,” says McClelland. “I love it!”

Kress was 41 when, after 20 years of living with kidney disease, her kidneys failed and she was forced to start peritoneal dialysis.

McClelland first learned about Kress’s health condition and her desire for a kidney transplant when she changed her profile on a modelling website. “I thought photographers should know I had a visible dialysis tube in my abdomen,” says Kress. In an email to her, McClelland suggested Kress include her blood type on her web profile, and when he discovered his blood type was a match, he made the offer.

Kress was shocked. “I asked him why he would give a kidney to someone he had never met and he said, ‘If you saw someone drowning in a lake, would you save them or let them die?’”

The first time McClelland and Kress met face to face was when he came to Vancouver in September 2008 for some final tests prior to the transplant operation. “It was like meeting someone you’ve known your whole life,” he says. “We had a lot of things in common.”

Of course today, the two have much more in common.

For Kress, who designs and models swimwear, receiving McClelland’s kidney enabled the removal of her dialysis catheter and provided significant benefits for both her health and her career. Meanwhile, the scars she and McClelland share from the transplant operation remain as a visible reminder of their essential connection.

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Backgrounder

How many people have kidney disease in BC?

An estimated 200,000 British Columbians have some level of kidney disease, and most do not know it. Over 90 percent have no symptoms.

What is the health risk for someone unaware of their kidney disease?

A person can have kidney disease for years and not know it. Without treatment, over time their kidney function will gradually deteriorate until their kidneys no longer function properly and they need kidney replacement therapy.

What are some of the symptoms to look for?

In the early stages of kidney disease, many individuals experience no symptoms. However, common early symptoms of kidney disease include: foamy or bloody urine; a frequent need to urinate at night; headaches; and puffy eyes or ankles.

Why is early detection of the disease important?

Early diagnosis and treatment of kidney disease are essential for achieving the best health outcomes. In the early stages of the disease, medication and changes to diet and lifestyle can slow or even stop its progression.

Where can I learn more about kidney disease?

www.bcrenalagency.ca
www.kidney.bc.ca

How many people are in need of a kidney transplant in BC?

Currently, over 300 British Columbians are waiting for a life changing kidney transplant

How many kidney transplants are performed in BC each year?

In 2010 BC Transplant performed a record number —189—kidney transplants. Of those, 97 transplants were made possible through living donation.

How can I learn more about living kidney donations?

Each year, in BC, there are more living donor kidney transplants performed compared to deceased donation kidney transplants. If you'd like to learn more about living donation visit transplant.bc.ca

How do I register to be an organ donor in BC?

Registering to be an organ donor in BC is easy, it takes seconds online at transplant.bc.ca