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Kansas man travels to Israel to give kidney to 10-year-old Jewish boy

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MARYSVILLE, Kan. - Eric Swim was surfing on the Internet in June when he stumbled across the story of a 10-year-old Jewish boy from Israel who was in desperate need of a kidney transplant.

"I began thinking that I have two good kidneys," the Marysville man said, "and I didn't have to have one of them."

Swim, 38, returned Sunday from Israel with one less kidney and the thanks of the many Israelis he met.

"It's a humbling thing when a Holocaust survivor comes up to you and says 'you're a big hero,' or 'gibor' in Hebrew," Swim said Monday during an interview at his home, "when in reality all I did was donate a kidney. It's very humbling."

The organ recipient, Moshiko Sharon, who had waited for a compatible kidney donor for more than a year, is doing well after undergoing implant surgery Sept. 21 at a Tel Aviv-area hospital.

But before the surgery could happen Swim had to undergo tests to determine whether he would be a good match. Swim learned the results of the tests Sept. 3 and left three days later for Tel Aviv.

"I was doing my housekeeping work at the hospital when we got the call," said Swim, who works at Community Memorial Healthcare Inc. in Marysville. "It was Labor Day weekend and the banks were shutting down, and they wanted us to leave for Israel on Labor Day. So we left, with four airline tickets we had bought at the last minute and \$60 in our pockets."

Swim was joined by his wife, Lori, 34, and the couple's two children, Lucy, 10, and Josiah, 6.

"So many bad things are going on these days that it is hard to look at the world and have any hope for children," Lori Swim said. "If you want to have children see a better way, maybe saving one person's life will help us in the bigger scheme of things."

Swim was raised as a Missouri Synod Lutheran but he and his wife began studying Judaism several years ago and are considering converting.

Swim, who earned a law degree from the University of Kansas in 1993, has worked at the 45-bed Marshall County hospital since returning to Marysville five years ago. Besides his

housekeeping duties, Swim works part-time as the hospital's compliance officer.

His wife, who has an education degree, home-schools the couple's children.

The organ donation was facilitated by the New York-based Halachic Organ Donor Society, which educates Jews about organ donation.