



US Jew Flies to Israel to Donate Kidney: 'I Love Jews'

by Eli Stutz

Elul 2, 5770, 12 August 10 12:54

(Israelnationalnews.com) Forty-one year old Eric Steger is man with a mission. Years ago, he decided that he wanted to help the Jewish people by saving lives - by donating from his own body. Three years ago he donated his bone marrow and helped save a leukemia patient. Now, he has flown all the way to Israel just to donate his kidney to a Jewish mother with a large family who is on dialysis. Though the operation has been called off for medical reasons, he continues to promote the cause.

Steger is 41-years-old, single, and hails from Sunnyvale, California. He told his story to *Israel National News*:

"After I donated my bone marrow, I was on the Gift of Life Bone Marrow donation website, and I saw a link to a site of someone who needed a kidney. I decided to get involved in that type of donation, too. I got in touch with the [Halachic Organ Donor Society](#). They matched me up with a patient in Israel, but that didn't work out. They have people on waiting lists in Israel and the US. After a long process, I was told about Chaya Lipschutz, who has an organization based in New York which is dedicated to matching up kidney donors. Her website is [KidneyMitzvah.com](#)."

Lipschutz was very enthusiastic about Steger's being willing to travel so far to donate to a stranger. She writes:

"Eric is a wonderful person and an ideal candidate for kidney donation! I matched him up with a woman with a large family in Israel who is on dialysis. If he is not a match for her, he would be willing to donate a kidney to anyone else in Israel in need! Wow! How many people would be willing to leave their job for many weeks, to go overseas to donate a kidney! Amazing! Eric already saved a life by donating bone marrow! He is also a great piano player. To hear a sample of his great music playing on You Tube, [click here](#)."

Lipschutz is currently involved in several other kidney matches in Israel and the U.S. When asked why he wanted to donate a kidney so badly, Steger explains, "You could say that is because of a great love for the Jewish people. I am Jewish. From all the reading I did and people I talked to, it seemed a pretty safe bet. I wasn't concerned it would harm my health."

"I contacted Chaya through her website," says Steger. "We made arrangements to donate to a patient in L.A. That patient backed out for unclear reasons."

The search started again. "Chaya asked if I was willing to travel, and I said yes. She had someone in Israel badly needed a kidney. A long negotiating process began to get me to Israel for the donation."

"In the late spring of this year, we set a date, which was a few days ago. After I got here [Israel], the testing started. There was concern that my blood pressure was too high. So I was given a 24-hour monitor to wear starting yesterday morning. I returned to the hospital in Tel HaShomer this morning. The news I received just minutes ago was not encouraging. I was diagnosed with hypertension and unfortunately the operation has been called off."

Steger is not discouraged that this particular donation isn't working out. "I can help promote the cause even though I can't donate myself. I will certainly be an advocate for kidney and bone marrow donation."

Steger's travel expenses were paid by the patient's medical insurance, but he is missing days of work.

Steger says he received varied reactions from friends and family about his initiative, which ranged from great positive support to skepticism. "There was some real negativity there too," he relates. "This type of donation is still relatively new. Altruistic donation is a new concept, but it's not generally well known, and so I think there's a lack of information in people's minds about it."

Steger says he's been to Israel once before. "I love Israel and I'd love to come again."

When asked about the side effects and risks of a kidney donation, Steger is nonchalant. "There are no long-term side effects. The donor has to stay 3-4 days in the hospital. There are activity restrictions after surgery and no heavy lifting for several weeks. The risks are the same as the risks there would be in any surgery."

Steger believes that much good has come out of his attempt to donate a kidney. "I think the life being saved was my own," he says. "The Hypertension [from which I suffer] was missed in the US. This could save my life. Because I volunteered to fly around the world and donate my kidney, they found this unnoticed thing which could prevent serious complications for me down the road."

Steger hasn't looked back either. "It's a huge mitzvah to save someone's life this way."

© Copyright IsraelNationalNews.com

[www.IsraelNationalNews.com](#)

Subscribe to the free Daily Israel Report - [israelnn.com/subscribe](#)