Oscar Chandler, of New Castle, was in his 30s when he learned his kidneys had been damaged by medication he was taking for colitis. He was only 38 when his disease had progressed to the point where he would either start dialysis or undergo a kidney transplant.

The waiting time for a deceased donor is lengthy, typically five years or more. Patients can avoid the wait with a live donor, a relative, friend or altruistic stranger who is willing to donate a kidney.

“Having a live donor offers another significant advantage. The organs are healthier and tend to last much longer,” says Velma Scantlebury, M.D., associate director of the Kidney Transplant Program at Christiana Care.

Chandler was blessed with two willing donors, his wife and a family friend. Amy Chandler and her husband were a match.

In preparation for the transplant, doctors recommended that Chandler and his wife Amy lose weight. They hired personal trainers and began exercising in earnest. In less than five months, Oscar lost 50 pounds. Amy, who had less weight to lose, took off 15 pounds.

The transplant took place on April 10, 2012. Less than three weeks later, both spouses were back at work.

Since donation, Amy has continued with the active lifestyle she started in preparation for donation. She completed her first Tough Mudder, MudManX, Spartan and half marathon and continues to run and work out in the gym several days a week. “Most days begin with a visit to the gym before I start work for the day. I have such a greater appreciation for health now and want to continue to stay active and healthy,” she added.

These days, the Chandlers and their son enjoy hiking at Lums Pond State Park near Bear. They went zip-lining in the Poconos. And when Chandler goes to visit the transplant center, he takes the stairs instead of the elevator.

Living donation means a functioning kidney is taken from one person and placed in another person whose kidneys have failed. After the transplant operation, both the donor and the recipient can return to normal, active lives.
What are the advantages of living kidney donation?
- Waiting time to transplant is weeks instead of years, often before dialysis is started.
- Living donor kidneys function better.
- Living donor kidneys last longer.
- Transplants can be scheduled in advance. Both the donor and recipient can be in the best condition for surgery.
- If the donor is not a match, Paired Kidney Donation is an option. With this option a donor will donate their kidney to another recipient who also has an incompatible donor.

Who can be a living donor?
A living donor can be a blood relative, a spouse, a co-worker, friend, or even someone who wishes to remain anonymous. Because of modern anti-rejection medicines, using only relatives is no longer necessary.

Living donors must be 18 or older. They must be physically and mentally healthy to make the decision to donate. This is a totally voluntary decision, and at any time prior to the transplant, a donor may stop the process and withdraw from donation without consequences.

What is the evaluation?
Evaluation includes a complete medical history review, physical examination, blood and urine samples and other tests necessary to determine whether it is safe for the donor to proceed. All the information obtained is confidential. During the course of the evaluation, the living donor will meet with the Donor Team. The Donor Team includes a Surgeon, Nephrologist, Living Donor Coordinator, Social Worker, Dietician, and Financial Coordinator. In order to protect the living donor's best interests, a non-transplant team member called an Independent Donor Advocate (IDA) will be provided to each donor.

Who pays for the donation?
Costs for the evaluation, the transplant procedure and hospitalization are paid by the recipient’s Medicare or personal insurance. However, medical issues that might develop from the donation may not be covered by the recipient’s insurance. The Christiana Care Kidney Transplant Program has experienced team members to assist with any issues that may impact health or life insurance coverage.

What will life be like after kidney donation?
It is important that people who donate a kidney maintain healthy lifestyles and have yearly physicals to monitor their health. For both donor and recipient, living kidney donation is most often a very positive experience.

Steps of Living Donation

- **Step One: Online Application to Donate**
  Go to www.christianacare.org/kidneytransplant and click on the blue box “Interested in Living Donation?” to complete an online application to see if you qualify to be a donor. If you qualify, you will then be contacted by a member of our staff.

- **Step Two: Phone Interview**
  You will be interviewed about your medical history and general health by a staff member. If you qualify to be a donor, you will be sent a packet of materials including further information and consent forms.

- **Step Three: Insurance & Medical Records Review**
  You will need to send your medical records from your primary care physician, so that we can further evaluate your health history.

- **Step Four: Evaluation**
  Preliminary tests will be done to determine blood type and kidney function. After preliminary tests are complete, you will undergo a full evaluation with our team. This includes a medical evaluation and psychosocial evaluation. Once you are medically cleared by our team, you can continue on for a surgical consultation.

- **Step Five: Donation**
  After steps one through four are completed, you will plan for and undergo living donation transplant surgery performed by our surgical team and your donation will be complete. Techniques used for the surgery will be performed according to what is best for the donor and the recipient. Any questions about the procedure can be answered by our clinicians.

- **Step Six: Follow-Up**
  After your living donor surgery, the hospital stay will typically take about three to four days. You will follow-up with the Transplant Office to evaluate your kidney health. Most donors return to full activity in three to four weeks.

Are there any risks?
Kidney donation is a major operation and cannot be done without risk. These issues are recognized and will be carefully reviewed with the donor by the transplant team. Risks for each donor will be individually addressed by the multidisciplinary team.

How long is the recovery?
With kidney donation surgery, hospital stay is typically three to four days. Most donors return to full activity in three to four weeks. Recovery times can vary depending on the type of surgery performed and the activity level the donor will be expected to return to after surgery.