

Call it Fate or Just Good Luck

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David McCarthy says he isn't a big believer in coincidence. He thinks he and Jackson Oliver ended up as hotel roommates at the first Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A) Tax Boot Camp in Dallas in 2008 because they were meant to cross paths.

While hanging out in their room the first night, the pair found out they had more in common than tax expertise and a love of sports: as young men, both had donated kidneys to family members and saved their lives.

"I mentioned that I don't drink much alcohol," said McCarthy, now a ICS senior manager. "Jackson said he has to be careful with alcohol as well because he had donated a kidney a few years earlier. The chances are astronomical. We thought the meeting organizer somehow knew our history."



But Jennifer Breazeale, director, M&A Tax Operations, confirms the pairing was completely accidental, arranged by a meeting planner who randomly assigned the 27 boot camp attendees to rooms. "Most of the time people don't want to share rooms but this time it really worked out."

McCarthy, 33, says he'd never met another donor before Oliver. He had donated a kidney to his sister's husband three years before, in 2005, while in graduate school at the University of Arizona. Of the organ donation, McCarthy says he would have "done it for anyone. I don't believe in coincidence, and people don't cross my path by mistake. We were just in the right place at the right time."



David McCarthy on a diving trip in Musandam. *April is National Donate Life month.*

McCarthy, a world traveler who's worked in Phoenix, done long-term rotations in Dubai and Amsterdam, and now resides in Seattle, has given up soccer in favor of distance running and trains with dozens of other organ donors and recipients. He recognizes his donation anniversary every year on March 9 by going out for a quiet dinner alone. "You go into that operating room alone, somehow an evening alone seems most appropriate." His parents also send him an anniversary card.

Oliver, 31, a manager in the M&A Tax group, who just returned from a Tax Trek assignment in Germany with his wife, Nancy, and their toddler son, joined the Philadelphia office straight from college in 2003. He donated his kidney to his cousin two years earlier, in 2001, when he was 20 years old, during Thanksgiving break during his junior year at LaSalle University in Philadelphia.

"Unfortunately, my cousin passed away in June," Oliver says quietly. "It's been tough to talk about, but he had taken a turn for the worse in the last two years, when he began to go into rejection. I take solace in the fact that he had a successful 10 years, and I try to focus on the transplant program and what a good experience it was for me and my family." He says it was comforting to discuss his cousin's passing with McCarthy, who understands the special loss of an organ recipient.

Oliver, one of nine children, says after the surgery his cousin used to introduce him as "the guy who gave me his kidney, the nicest guy I know." But Oliver says he received a gift, too. "I got the chance to save someone's life and be part of a miracle."

Despite their geographical and practice differences, the two have remained good friends and most recently were instructors at the Tax Skills Seminar in Orlando. They say they are sure there are more donors like them at KPMG but are difficult to find.



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Jackson Oliver and family in Germany.

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