

# Getting his life back

## Woman gives her dad part of her liver and watches him thrive

By Celeste Edenloff  
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When Molly Maudal had surgery June 11 to remove over half of her liver, she had a 1 in 300 chance of dying. That's a greater chance than if she had gone skydiving, she said.

But it didn't really matter as the risk was worth the reward. She became a living donor for her father, Mike Maudal.

Mike, a retired AgCountry Farm Credit Service loan officer from Carlos, needed a liver transplant because his liver was dying – he was dying. He had been diagnosed with non-alcoholic steatohepatitis, an aggressive and serious form of liver disease.

Molly, 23, an occupational therapist at Glacial Ridge Health System in Glenwood, made the decision to be a living donor for her dad after being told his only chance of surviving was to find a living donor.

"Being a living liver donor was extremely rewarding," said Molly. "Being able to see my dad's energy levels improve, his personality and sense of humor come back, and his color and overall appearance of wellness progress – it's pretty hard to top that."

Molly added that the best part of being a living donor is that she's been able to see the improvements firsthand being with her dad nearly every day since the transplant.

"It's beautiful giving the gift of life," she said.

### His diagnosis

The cause of Mike's liver disease, known as NASH, is not really known. According to the Mayo Clinic, risk factors include obesity, gastric bypass surgery, high cholesterol and type 2 diabetes, none of which he had. Over time, inflammation and scarring of the liver (cirrhosis) can occur, which is what happened in Mike's case, and eventually a transplant is needed.

Mike's health issues started back in 2015 with a routine physical. He had learned years prior that he had fatty liver disease, but it was left untreated. In early 2016, he was scheduled for an appointment at Mayo Clinic to address the issues discovered at his physical. Two and a half days before that appointment, he had an esophageal bleed. It was then that his diagnosis of NASH was confirmed. He then continued to doctor regularly at Mayo for management of the disease.

Regardless of what was being done, Mike was told that he was in the end stage of NASH and that he needed a transplant.

### Living donors

Molly, Mike and Cindy Maudal, Molly's mom and Mike's wife, explained the process of being on a transplant list and the importance of living donors.

Although Mike was on the transplant list, his best case of survival was to find a living donor. As sick as he was, he wasn't moving up the transplant list fast enough. If he had had cancer of the liver, his climb to the top would have been much faster, he said.

Cindy said that it is up to families to find a living donor and that there isn't a donor registry to choose living donors from. She also noted that there are no medical costs incurred being a living donor. She said the recipient covers all testing and medical costs associated with the transplant.

The family had previously started the search for a living donor and had some prospects, but in the end, they were not eligible. There are certain criteria a living donor must meet, along with going through extensive testing.

Cindy had started the process but found out she wasn't eligible because of the size of each lobe of her liver. If she had had one lobe removed, the other lobe wasn't big enough to sustain life until it



Contributed

Molly Maudal, 23, and her father, Mike Maudal, stopped for a photo while on a walk on the transplant floor at Mayo Clinic in June. Mike had a liver transplant on June 11 with Molly as the living donor.

regenerated. If she kept the bigger lobe, the smaller lobe wasn't big enough for Mike to live.

In Molly's case, her right lobe made up 58% of her liver while the left made up 42%. She was able to donate the right, larger half to her father and live with the smaller half until it regenerated back to its original size. In one week, the livers in both Mike and Molly had regenerated to about 93%.

Molly and Mike each now have a full-sized liver, but unlike most people, it is made up of only one lobe.

More than 12,000 people are waiting for a liver transplant, according to the Mayo Clinic, which performs living donor transplants for both liver and kidney patients. In fact, according to its website, Mayo Clinic has one of the largest living donor kidney transplants programs in the U.S. Living donor transplantation often offers people an attractive alternative to waiting for a deceased donor organ. Patients



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The Maudal family, from left, Molly, Mike and Cindy, pictured on their farm in Carlos.

may have a shorter waiting period and fewer complications with a living donor transplant, according to the website. The clinic has performed live liver transplants since 1985.

### God's handiwork

Mike and Molly had their surgeries at Mayo Clinic on June 11. Molly was in the hospital for six days, while her dad was in for seven. He got out the Friday before

### Father's Day.

"It was a pretty good Father's Day," said Mike, saying the gift his daughter gave him was pretty special.

Cindy shared a fun little fact about that day, but it was something that had happened 24 years prior. She said it was God at work.

"Twenty four years ago on June 11, I found out I was pregnant with Molly, our only

child," she said, noting that they had learned they were giving life to someone. With tears in her eyes, she looked at her daughter and said, "And now, you're giving dad his life back."

After their surgeries, Mike and Molly had to have caregivers for 24 hours a day, seven days a week for several weeks after the surgeries – Cindy was Mike's

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# 'Free Guy' breaks hybrid debuting trend

Since the pandemic shut down theaters last spring, almost every new movie has debuted in a hybrid release. A theater experience is an option, but new films are also available for rent at home.

Some movies have been released strictly in theaters, but none as advertised as "Free Guy." It's the story of a background character in an open-world video game that starts to become a coherent player. The game is on the verge of being shut down in the wake of a sequel, and he decides it's his turn to be the hero.

Ryan Reynolds plays Guy, the main character. It's a classic Reynolds comedy with familiar tropes, and it's an absolute blast. This movie is definitely tailored for a



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younger audience. There is a mountain of video game references, but it can still be a fun watch even for the non-gamer.

"Free Guy" is a movie that was made for theaters. There's a boatload of CGI and action scenes in a film where you're not supposed to think too deeply about the plot. It's a film where you can shut your brain off for a few hours and have a good time.

Fans of Netflix's hit show "Stranger Things" will recognize Joe Keery in a supporting role. Taika

Waititi, one of my favorite filmmakers in Hollywood, starred as the antagonist in one of his rare acting roles. I think some parts of this movie miss the mark, but it's not meant to be taken seriously. It's a film for fun and that's where it excels. I gave "Free Guy" a 79/100.

What makes "Free Guy" such an important film to discuss is it could have implications on the immediate future of theater releases. Part of its marketing campaign was centered around it being a theater-only film with no second option for streaming on release.

"Free Guy" is one of this summer's blockbusters by default. I would think it might not get that same luxury in a typical year, but

with so many big-budget films getting pushed to the fall, movies like "Free Guy" benefit.

When the pandemic started, I spoke with a front-office member at CEC Theatres about how COVID-19 will impact the movie industry. To no surprise, he expected it to hurt. But the theater business was different because so many big-money movies were delayed, the excitement of seeing them once theaters reopened would recoup the losses during the months they were closed.

Some studios are still delaying movies while others take advantage of the audience's urge to come back. I'm not sure what a film like "Free Guy" was expected to do at the box office when it was pitched to 21st Century

Fox, but if it hits or surpasses its monetary goal, delays could be a thing of the past.

Another movie to keep an eye on is Marvel's "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings." Disney is advertising it as a theater-only release. The Asian market is one of Disney's most significant, and now Marvel has its first Asian hero film. This had the potential to be one of Marvel's highest-grossing origin stories before the pandemic.

If you're comfortable going to the theater, please go. Our theater in Alexandria is top-notch, and there's always something playing for you. It's important to see movies in theaters because we don't want to lose them.

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