



**By Eugene Blankenship,**  
DPC Board of Directors

Gene has had a front row seat to life with kidney disease for as long as he can remember. His entire family has been affected by kidney disease, and he was diagnosed himself in 2003. While it has come with challenges, Gene has continuously pushed forward, bolstered by the loving support of his family and those in the dialysis community he's met along the way.

After three years on dialysis, Gene was finally able to receive a kidney transplant this year. Persevering through dialysis treatments can take a toll, but Gene learned firsthand his ability to overcome obstacles with the help of his support system.

After Gene started dialysis, he began attempting in-home treatments, but eventually transitioned to in-center, where he's had a positive experience and seen how differently patients handle their treatments.

## FOR GENE BLANKENSHIP,

# Family is Everything

While Gene has always been eager to speak up when things aren't right, he learned that many dialysis patients don't have that same level of comfort, and he used his time in the clinic to engage with other patients and inspire them to be courageous when times get difficult. Gene's compassion for fellow members

of the dialysis community did not go unnoticed.

Gene has been deeply touched by the support he's received at the dialysis clinic, often from complete strangers. His biggest source of strength and support throughout dialysis have been



his wife, his sister and his children, but the relationships and encouragement Gene developed at the clinic have also been extraordinarily uplifting, acting as an extension of his family.

This support system gave Gene the courage to persevere through his dialysis treatments until he finally received a kidney transplant, something he is certain would not have been achievable on his own.

Gene and his family love traveling, going to the beach, fishing, fairs, and anything they can do together. They've already gone to Disney World and Universal Studios and have made a million memories together with Gene on dialysis and are even more excited to continue making them without having to plan around Gene's treatment schedule.

Gene has also found an incredible support system through his job with the Oklahoma Public Employees Association, which has been a source of strength on his journey with kidney disease.

Not only has his employer been very respectful of his condition, but his position allows him to help employees across Oklahoma, something sharing his experiences on dialysis adds great value to. Sharing this perspective outside of the dialysis community is something Gene enjoys, and he's comfortable speaking about his experiences at meetings and with colleagues. People will often come up to Gene after a meeting to share that they are close with someone who has kidney disease, and that it's very valuable for them to hear his story.

While Gene has always appreciated the empathy he's received from those who hear his story, he does not want it to turn into people feeling sorry for him. He knows that his health and his life are in his own control, and as he says, "there ain't no give up in me!"

When asked his main advice for those starting dialysis, Gene said, "don't let the worry take up residence in your mind. It's not as bad as you think, and it's not going to be as bad as you think. You can live a good life on dialysis."

Gene is an advocate for educating yourself on the effects of kidney disease once you get diagnosed. There's so much false information out there, and he believes it's very important to research,



talk to your doctors, and understand that your circumstances might not be as bad as you think they are.

Of course, Gene does recognize the challenges of dialysis, understanding the importance of being honest with yourself and how your lifestyle will change. But above all, he is adamant in meeting these challenges head-on as soon as they arise, otherwise they will compound and become much more difficult to overcome.

When it comes to overcoming the daily challenges, Gene says, "Push through, get to the other side, and collect those small victories."

DPC has also been a source of inspiration for him, as they've done a great job of raising awareness and providing opportunities to connect with others in the kidney disease community. Through DPC, Gene gets to speak weekly with a patient from Ireland, sharing their experiences and strengthening the bonds of their powerful community.

Gene is also grateful for the information and resources DPC provides patients, including how they can help themselves and be in charge of their own healthcare. When it comes to kidney disease, Gene says "bad advice is deadly advice," and having reliable sources of information is so critical.

Gene has had an extremely fulfilling life while managing his kidney disease and dialysis treatments. He attributes this to his incredible family and his support system in the dialysis community, serving as a great team helping him juggle all of the daily responsibilities of working a full time job, being a husband and father, and having kidney disease.

As Gene shows, dialysis is much easier to overcome with a strong support system, and the team at DPC is eager to help. If you would like to speak with any of our advocates, or learn how to become one yourself, feel free to get in touch with us at [www.dialysispatients.org](http://www.dialysispatients.org) or by calling (866) 877-4242. We can't wait to meet you!