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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Mayor Elicker Highlights Living Organ Donation with Proclamation to Donor and Advocate Mark Scotch**

NEW HAVEN, Conn. – Mayor Justin Elicker is honoring Mark Scotch, a 65-year-old from Plover, Wisconsin who made one stop in New Haven while on his 1,600-mile bike ride to raise awareness of living organ donation.

Scotch and Mayor Elicker met on the steps of New Haven city hall where the Mayor presented Scotch with a proclamation honoring his efforts to raise awareness around this critical topic. Photos can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/x4ncc8eh>

Scotch's ride, dubbed "organ trail" began Sunday, Sept. 19, in Martha's Vineyard. From there, he'll travel into New York City, go through upstate New York, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan and arrive back to his hometown in central Wisconsin, on approximately Saturday, Oct. 16. Cycling his way to promote kidney disease, living donor awareness, and post-donation functionality.

"Meeting Mark was an honor, his advocacy is truly inspiring," **said Mayor Justin Elicker**. "There are more than 100,000 American citizens currently waiting for life-saving kidney transplants. Through education we can encourage more people to become organ donors."

"The Organ Trail is all about generating awareness for the need for kidney donors, especially living kidney donors, but it's also about showing people that even with one kidney, you can still lead a life full of activities, even if those activities are sustained and vigorous," **said Scotch**.

Scotch's story began in early 2020 when he met Hugh Smith, 56, a former professional horse jockey, at Cane River Brewing in Smith's hometown of Natchitoches, Louisiana.

Scotch learned that during his days as a jockey, Smith suffered frequent injuries. To combat the pain, he took ibuprofen for an extended period of time. This damaged his kidneys, sending him into severe renal failure in 2019 and requiring him to have daily dialysis. This also put him alongside nearly 100,000 Americans waiting for a life-saving kidney.

Just the day before, the two men had been strangers. That day, Scotch knew what he wanted to do: give one of his kidneys to Smith.

Although Scotch's kidney wasn't a direct match for Smith, he still wanted to donate a kidney to someone who needed one. Through the National Kidney Registry Voucher Program he became a "voucher donor" where he would be matched with a recipient somewhere in the country. Once the kidney donation was complete, Scotch could also name Smith as the person he wanted to benefit, which would give the former jockey higher priority on the National Kidney Registry transplant list.

In September 2020, Scotch was matched with a compatible individual in New York and successfully donated his kidney, and in early 2021, Smith received his needed kidney from a donor in California. Hugh's doctors are pleased with his recovery and he is looking forward to returning to work soon.

"The voucher system let me to do everything at my local hospital while Hugh went to his local hospital in Jackson, Mississippi, and gave Hugh higher priority on the transplant list," said Scotch.

To increase kidney disease and living donor awareness, celebrate Smith, and prove that donors can return to their previous level of activity and function on a single kidney, even if that activity is sustained and vigorous, Scotch put his cycling skills to use. In early 2021, he completed his first Organ Trail, cycling 1500 miles from Madison, where he donated his kidney, to Natchitoches, where Smith and he first met.

With 3,000 new patients added monthly to the kidney waiting list, and 13 people dying every day because of a shortage of kidneys, the cyclist-turned-kidney donor plans to continue raising awareness about living kidney donation through The Organ Trail.

To contact Mark, email [ml.scotch@nkdo.org](mailto:ml.scotch@nkdo.org) or call 678-488-1996.

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