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### (Neb.)-Chadron Father Receives The Best Christmas Gift From His Son



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 12/26/2012 11:01 AM

*Photo: Justin and Earl McConnell (Courtesy of 9 News, Denver)*

(ARVADA, COLO.)-A family from northwest Nebraska has had to spend their Christmas in the Denver area this year. Chadron resident Earl McConnell and wife Shelby have never spent a Christmas away from Nebraska. They knew this year would be different though, when Earl's diagnosis got worse.

On November 11th, 2011, doctors told Earl his kidneys were failing. They said it was only a matter of time before his health would decline fast, and he'd need a replacement as soon as possible.

The news was troubling to the family because deep down they knew how long the wait for a replacement kidney could be. "There were times when I thought 'I don't know how much more the kids could take,'" Shelby McConnell said.

It was especially difficult for Earl's son, Justin. Ever since he was a kid, Justin enjoyed spending time with his dad. That's why Justin offered a true gift of the season, one of his kidneys, when he found out how sick his dad was.

"He's an amazing individual," Earl McConnell said.

Justin was a perfect match. So the two headed for PorterAdventistHospital in Denver.

Justin said, "I told him right as I left, 'I love you, Dad.' I heard him say 'I love you, too.' Then I went to the operating room."

After a few hours of operation, the doctors came out and told Justin and Earl they'd both be fine.

Justin said, "The entire time after the surgery everyone was like "You're a hero." I was like, 'I just did what he would've done for me.'"

The family is staying with friends in Arvada, Colo., until the doctors give the go ahead to return home. They plan to head back to Nebraska next week with the best Christmas gift a father could ever ask for.

--Courtesy of Kevin Torres, 9 News KUSA-TV

To view the video, visit <http://www.9news.com/rss/story.aspx?storyid=306789>.