

# A Mother's A Son's Strength

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## Local 1180 Member Searches for Kidney Donor to Save Her Son

**Margaret Manolis** (Administrative Coordinator — New York City School Construction Authority) remembers the day she gave birth to her first son, Elias. Unlike most new parents who only pray for a healthy baby, Manolis already knew that her delivery would mark the beginning of a lifelong medical journey — one that would start before her son ever took his first breath.

During her seventh month of pregnancy, doctors discovered that Elias' kidneys were dangerously enlarged. He was diagnosed in utero with a rare condition known as a UVJ obstruction (Ureterovesical Junction Obstruction), which prevented urine from draining properly and caused it to back up into both kidneys. The resulting condition, hydronephrosis, meant that from the very beginning, Elias' kidneys were under severe strain.

"It was a lot to take in," Manolis said. "Being a first-time mom is hard enough. Being a first-time mom to a child with serious medical issues is a whole other ball game."

When Elias was born on Nov. 7, 2012, he was immediately rushed for testing and on his very first day of life, underwent surgery.

"That was horrible," Margaret recalled. "No parent is prepared for that."

Having just turned 13 in December, Elias has spent his entire life managing Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD), a progressive condition in which the kidneys gradually lose their ability to filter waste and excess fluid from the blood. Over time, CKD can lead to dangerous toxin buildup and serious complications, including kidney failure.

Since birth, Elias has endured 13 surgeries in just 13 years, including reconstructive procedures, nephrostomy tubes, catheters,

and other interventions designed to preserve kidney function as long as possible.

"Despite all of our efforts with surgeries and medications, his kidneys are still not able to function the way they need to," Manolis said. "As he's growing and hitting puberty, everything in his body is working faster, and his kidneys just can't keep up."

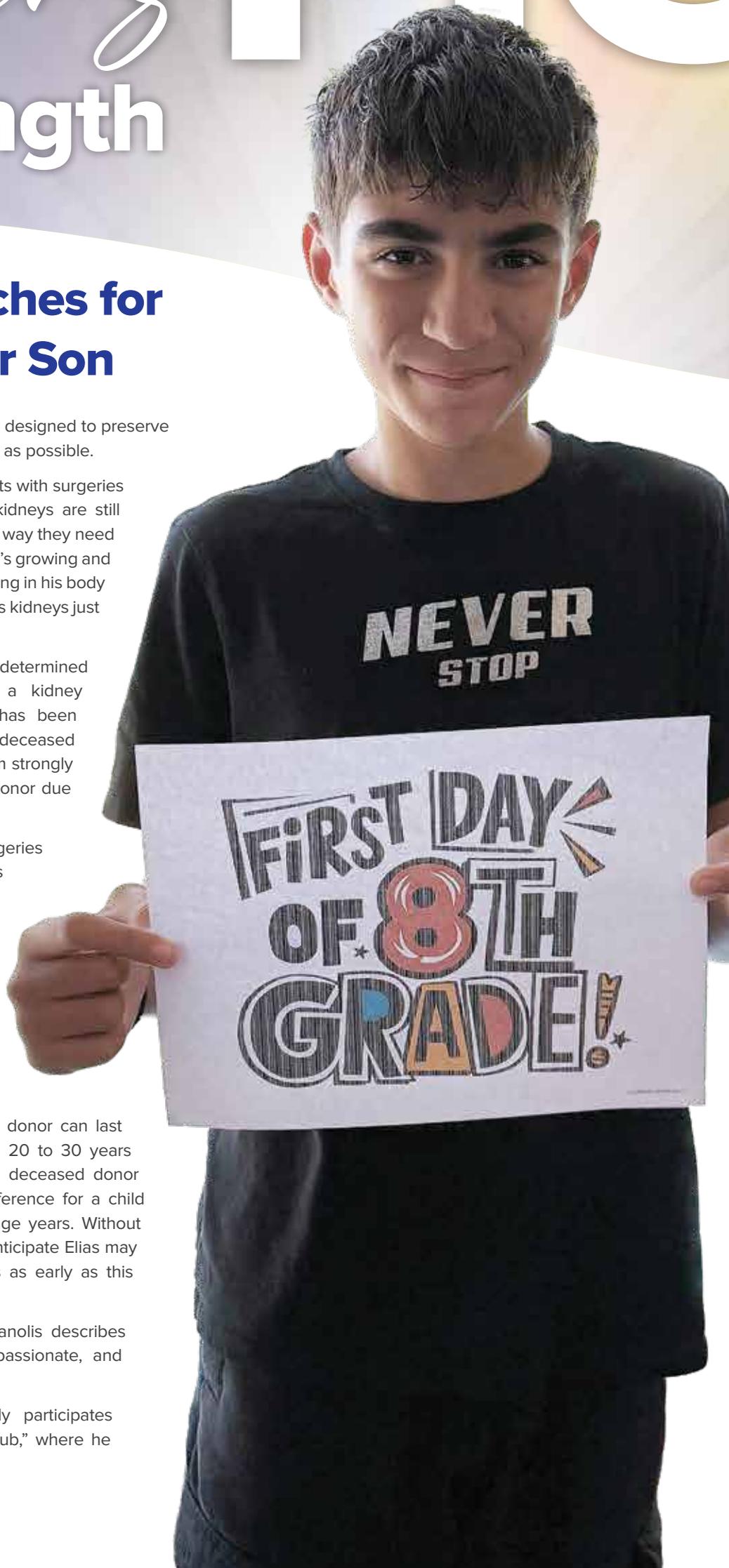
Doctors have now determined that Elias will need a kidney transplant. While he has been placed on the list for a deceased donor, his medical team strongly recommends a living donor due to his young age.

"I've had multiple surgeries to keep my kidneys from getting worse, but now I need a kidney transplant," Elias said. "I'm still young, and a living kidney donor would change my entire life and help me be healthier."

A kidney from a living donor can last twice as long — often 20 to 30 years — as a kidney from a deceased donor making it a critical difference for a child just entering his teenage years. Without a transplant, doctors anticipate Elias may need to begin dialysis as early as this spring.

Despite everything, Manolis describes Elias as a kind, compassionate, and determined kid.

At school, he proudly participates in the "Be a Buddy Club," where he





Story by Marci Rosenblum, Communications Director

## Organ & Living Kidney Donation

## Fast Facts

- One organ donor can save up to eight lives, and tissue donation can improve the lives of dozens more by restoring sight, mobility, and overall health.
- More than 100,000 people nationwide are currently waiting for an organ transplant.
- Because only a small number of deaths allow for deceased organ donation, living donors are critical, especially for kidney transplants.
- Living-donor kidney transplants last twice as long on average as kidneys from deceased donors — often 20–30 years.
- Healthy adults age 18 and older may be eligible to donate a kidney.
- There is no cost to the donor. All testing, surgery, hospital stays, and follow-up care are covered by the recipient's insurance.
- Most kidney donations are minimally invasive, and donors typically return to normal activities within a few weeks.
- People can live long, healthy lives with just one kidney.
- Many potential donors never register due to common misconceptions — including fear of surgery, concerns about cost, lack of information, or uncertainty about eligibility.
- For recipients, a kidney transplant can mean freedom from dialysis, better long-term health, and a dramatically improved quality of life.
- Organ and living kidney donation is voluntary, confidential, and carefully evaluated by medical professionals to protect donor health and safety.

helps support classmates with autism. At home, he enjoys riding his bike, swimming, and playing video games with his younger brother, Konstantinos, now 8. While some activities — like karate and competitive sports — have had to be scaled back, his family works hard to let Elias enjoy being a kid whenever possible.

“We try not to limit him too much,” Manolis said. “He’s already limited in so many ways — medications, daily catheterization, doctor visits every two weeks, and a strict plant-based diet. We want him to still have joy.”

That diet, recommended to help slow kidney deterioration, has required the entire family to make adjustments — no red meat, limited protein, and carefully planned meals. “It’s a work in progress,” Margaret admitted. “It’s not easy, especially for a growing teenager.”

Both Manolis and her husband were tested but are not eligible donors. Konstantinos is too young to donate, and extended family members are also unable to help. As a result, the family has turned outward, reaching out through community networks, faith organizations, social media, and now, the union family of CWA Local 1180.

“We’re just hoping for one person,” Margaret said. “We only need one.”

Living kidney donation is often misunderstood, but Manolis hopes more people will learn that donors can live full, healthy lives with just one kidney. Most procedures are minimally invasive, recovery times are typically only a few weeks, and all medical costs — including surgery, follow-up care, and related expenses — are covered by the recipient's insurance. Donors also receive their own independent medical and mental health care team throughout the process.

“There are so many success stories of strangers donating a kidney to help someone live a long, productive life without dialysis,” Margaret said. “It’s a beautiful thing. I wish I could do it myself.”

As Elias continues to attend school, manage treatments, and live day by day, his family remains hopeful that someone will step forward — not just to save a life, but to give a young boy the chance to grow up healthier, stronger, and with a future not defined by illness.



### Donor Interest

Elias is transitioning to a new transplant team to expand his donor search nationwide. If you'd like to learn more about becoming a living donor or wish to be screened as a potential match for Elias, please scan the code and complete the form.

Questions? Email  
[kidney4elias@gmail.com](mailto:kidney4elias@gmail.com)