

Brothers and Sisters,

My name is Steven Napierski and I've been a member of Local 280 and the Syracuse Fire Department for almost 16 years. I currently work out of Station 10, driving Truck 5. The brotherhood of the fire service has always amazed me; there are not many other professions where the bond is so strong. We depend on each other in so many ways.

I never thought that I'd be the one asking for help. Sure, I'd helped out with projects and fundraisers for fellow firefighters that needed assistance, but it never occurred to me that I may someday be in that position to need assistance.

Well here I am. About 5 years ago I was diagnosed with Polycystic Kidney Disease or PKD. PKD causes my kidneys and other organs to form innumerable cysts. The cysts displace healthy kidney tissue causing a decrease in kidney function. This is a genetic disorder, and due to the fact that I was adopted as a baby with no family history my family and I were quite shocked to find out about this.

Along with decrease in kidney function comes an increase in size of my native kidneys. While the normal kidney is around the size of a fist (about 11 cm in length), mine have grown to be about three times that size.

As of March 2020, my function had declined enough for me to be listed on the wait list to receive a kidney transplant. It has been a trying time with coronavirus to complete all of the steps needed to be listed, but with the help of the transplant team at Upstate Hospital we have accomplished just that. As of May 4, 2020, I was officially listed.

Just being listed doesn't mean that I'll automatically receive a kidney. To receive a deceased donor kidney, I'd have to experience renal failure and be on dialysis to have a score high enough to get one. Those things don't go particularly well with firefighting. At this point I have no problems working. My goal originally was to make retirement before I needed a kidney, but I don't make out the schedule.

This is why I am seeking a live donor kidney. There are many benefits to live donor kidneys. First it would allow me to avoid dialysis. Second, live donor kidneys on average, last twice as long as a deceased donor kidney. Third, avoiding dialysis and receiving a live donor kidney would allow me to return to the line and work until retirement, which is of much importance to my family. And lastly according to many of the people I have talked with who have received kidneys, my quality of life will improve greatly.

I am greatly humbled by the people that have already offered to be tested on my behalf. While this is something that I unfortunately need, it's not so easy to ask a family member or a friend to have elective surgery and give you a body part.

While that is extremely difficult for me to ask, one thing that isn't is checking the box on your drivers license to be an organ donor. Please donate your organs to someone who needs them when you leave this earth. You won't need them where your going. There are tens of thousands of people every year that go without a life saving transplant due to a lack of organs.

That said, yes, I will be needing a donated kidney to replace my two failing ones. If this is something that you'd like to help with you can contact Upstate Transplant at 315-463-5413 and speak with a transplant coordinator. Please feel free to share my story, the more people that see it the more likely I can find a good match.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and please stay safe.

Sincerely,

Steven, Julie, Grace, and Sara Napierski

