

Marc's Story

By Marc Coronel

From a young age, I dreamed and trained daily in order to become a professional boxer. However, my life took a drastic turn after receiving the results of a routine physical and full panel blood test: I was diagnosed with FSGS, Focal Segmental Glomerulosclerosis Kidney Failure. My diagnosis led me into one of the hardest times in my life. I was emotionally overwhelmed with depression, anxiety, and anger, and because my blood type is O+, I would experience a significantly longer wait time for a kidney transplant, since I could only accept kidney donations from O carriers.

The odds were stacked up against me, but I reminded myself that “you only fail if you fail to try”, so I asked myself: “what do I do now?” I saw an opportunity to raise awareness for my story and advocate for kidney disease support through social media. Keeping in line with my passion for athletics, I founded Lifestyle Athletics, a company running self-improvement programs in prisons, schools, and corporations. Even while suffering from FSGS, I was fully involved with Lifestyle Athletics, advocating with Kidney Walks and pursuing my passion for personal training. My efforts within the community did not go unnoticed, and I was offered a council seat in Panorama City as a youth co-chair, which allowed me to care for the many people residing in my community. What had started as a journey in fighting kidney failure evolved into a movement to offer myself community, and as a result, people were beginning to listen to my story.

In late August of 2018, my kidney failure had completely overtaken my body, and I was rushed to the hospital. Soon after, I began my dialysis treatment after a three-hour procedure. While on dialysis, I needed to take 15 different medications per day, receive dialysis three times a week for three hours, and monitor my water intake: daily life became difficult. My new lifestyle caused me to grow depressed, and I thought he would never return to being the sprightly, athletic young man I had been before.

During this depressive bout, I happened to read “The Alchemist” by Paulo Coelho. “‘My heart is afraid that it have to suffer,’ the boy told the alchemist. ‘Tell your heart that the fear of suffering is worse than the suffering itself. And that no heart has ever suffered when it goes in search of its dreams,’ the alchemist responded to the boy’.” These words impacted me deeply, and I knew that I had to follow my dream to become a professional boxer, so I began boxing with my catheter on dialysis to take back some semblance of control over my life. Ultimately, it was my strong desire to box that brought back my fighting spirit.

Every year, UCLA Health and the CORE Kidney Health Program hosts a Kidney Health Fair that promotes positivity and provides education for numerous topics related to kidney health. While on dialysis, I attended the fair in search of knowledge and a transplant. I found informative booths that catered to some of my specific needs, such as peritoneal dialysis and phosphorus binder pills. I was amazed by the fair and was touched by the supportiveness of the UCLA CORE Kidney Health Program and the strong, extensive community built around it. I recall having the opportunity to meet and have a conversation with living kidney donors, a special

moment that I would not have experienced without the help of the CORE Kidney Health Program. I am now an ambassador of the Circle of CORE, an outreach and advocacy group of living kidney donors and recipients who were inspired, post-transplant, to give back to the community that supported them through their journey, to educate the public about kidney disease, and to fundraise for the program that shares their vision, the UCLA CORE Kidney Health Program.

Throughout this process, I was blessed to have such a strong support system. I truly believe that anyone going through a difficult moment needs a backbone and crutch to lean on that will be with them throughout the whole process. I hope that my story will raise awareness for kidney disease and living kidney donations to save another life.