

# Bostonians helped by 'kidney matchmaker'

## Local patients desperately seek life-saving donors

By Cara Hogan  
*Advocate Staff*

Vanessa Evans of Marblehead is the mother of two boys, 4 and 2 years old, and she is in dire need of a new kidney. She has been on dialysis for the past 12 years, using a machine at home to filter her blood for two hours a day, five days a week.

"When I'm on the machine, I can't take care of my sons," said Evans. "At other times, it can be really tough if I'm tired and I haven't done the treatment."

Evans has been on the waiting list for organ transplant for the past 15 years to replace her scarred kidneys, but without success. An unusually high antibody count makes her chances of finding a match that much slimmer.

But now, Chaya Lipschutz has volunteered to be Evans' kidney matchmaker. Lipschutz is an Orthodox Jew from New York who donated a kidney to a stranger as a mitzvah and has since made it her life's mission to find living donors for Jews and non-Jews.

"I saw an ad for a mother of two who needed a kidney and I donated a kidney to her," said Lipschutz. "After I donated, I saw more ads for people who needed a kidney and I felt so bad; I felt I wanted to help them as well."

There is no national list of living donors, so Lipschutz began to work full-time at kidney matchmaking, making contacts around the country and the world for those in need. She said it is often difficult to find people willing to undergo surgery for a stranger.

"Donating was not a big

deal for me, but I understand that for people who are terrified of surgery, it's not for them," she said. "But really, it's a comparatively low risk operation."

According to the National Kidney Foundation, 100,000 people die each year from kidney disease, and 18 people die each day waiting for transplants, even though living organ donation has tripled since 1990. The kidney is the most commonly given organ by a living donor because when one is removed, the remaining kidney is more than adequate.

Jewish law generally encourages living organ donation, which is seen as a fulfillment of the mitzvah (commandment) to preserve life. For a complete halachic view, however, a Talmudic authority should be consulted.

"People have no problem having only one kidney, so we have to ask, why did G-d give us two kidneys?" said Lipschutz, quoting Dr. Stuart Greenstein, a kidney transplant surgeon in New York. "Perhaps it is so you would have an extra one to donate and save a life."

Evans said she appreciates the effort and work Lipschutz does to save people she has sometimes never met.

"Someone like Chaya is very special," said Evans. "There's no one else helping find matches, or if they are, they're a broker and asking for money. She just wants to help people."

Lipschutz recently found one willing, living donor in Boston and hopes to finally find a match for Evans, or for Craig Solomon, a 27-year-old

Framingham man that has been on a transplant list for seven years. His renal problems are the result of Alport's syndrome, a genetic disease that has destroyed his kidneys.

Even though Solomon knows a donor is his only chance at survival, he advised anyone thinking of it to consider the consequences carefully.

"I'd tell them to do it for the right reasons," said Solomon. "Do it if you really want to save a life, but if there's any lingering doubt in your mind, then don't. Make sure you're completely healthy, not just physically."

Solomon's family almost lost him to a coma, from which he recently recovered. Because of his O-type blood, neither his mother nor his father, Barry Solomon, can be donors.

"He is so lucky to be alive and he's been given a second chance," said Barry Solomon. "We're hoping to find a stranger to donate to him soon. But the longer it is, the more difficult it is because you build up immunities."

Remaining on dialysis is also a physical challenge, according to Evans.

"To be off dialysis, the lifestyle change would be so tremendous to me," she said. "There's no way I, or my family, could ever thank [a living donor]. I'm hopeful that one day it will be my turn, and either with medicines or by finding the perfect match, I'll be able to recover."

For more information, contact Chaya Lipschutz at [kidneymitzvah@aol.com](mailto:kidneymitzvah@aol.com) or visit [www.kidneydonor-kidneymatchmaker.com](http://www.kidneydonor-kidneymatchmaker.com).