Last Wednesday, a group of close friends and family were invited to a luncheon at Rino’s Place in East Boston by John Nucci. The day marked the one year anniversary of Nucci’s life-saving kidney transplant.

The former Boston City Councilor and current Suffolk University senior vice president wanted to bring a group of friends and family together to thank them for all their love and support during his battle against Polysystic Kidney Disease, his life-saving transplant surgery and subsequent recovery.

One person in the room, Kerri Abrams, who donated one of her kidneys to Nucci stood out among the crowd. “There are really no words to explain the gratitude I feel towards my family and friends and of course Kerri, my wonderful donor who gave me this second chance at life,” said an emotional Nucci holding Abrams’s hand last Wednesday. “Being surrounded by all of you today makes this already special day even more special and rewarding.

The one anniversary gift that would make Kerri and I the most happy would be if everybody here spread the word about organ donation and how important it is. It literally saves lives.”

Abrams said she loves watching how far Nucci’s family has come since the surgery. “Watching them enjoy these moments, it’s everything,” she said at last week’s luncheon.

Nucci’s wife, Peggy called Abrams’s kidney donation “a beautiful gift” to the Nucci family.

“Thanks to the beautiful gift of life that John’s remarkable and generous donor Kerri Abrams provided, John is still with us, feeling great, and entirely back to normal,” said Nucci.
Peggy. “Maybe you volunteered to donate a kidney, or maybe you prayed and sent us good wishes—it all made a difference and we are forever grateful. Thank you all so much.”

Nucci, 67, suffers from Polycystic Kidney Disease, the same kidney disease that killed his father at the age of 64. He and Abrams underwent the lifesaving kidney transplant surgery on June 19, 2018.

“My kidneys went from 12 percent down to 2 percent from February to June,” said Nucci after the surgery. “Kerri is just an amazing and brave woman. To read about my story, step up and undergo all the testing and agreeing to go through with donating her kidney to me after she found out she was a match is something that is so moving to me and my family.”

In his 30s, after the passing of his father following complications of Polycystic Kidney Disease, Nucci found out that he had inherited the same genetic disorder where the renal tubules become structurally abnormal, resulting in the development and growth of multiple cysts within the kidney.

The diagnosis was grim and for the last three decades, Nucci lived knowing that some day his kidneys would begin shutting down.

“I was tested in my 30s to find out if I had inherited the disease and I was told then that I did in fact have cysts on my kidneys,” said Nucci. “As these cysts form over the years your kidney function gets lower and lower. The doctors at MassGeneral had been watching it every year since I was in my 30s and in the past year my levels have been dropping fast. That’s the nature of this disease. Once you’re diagnosed you’re never at full kidney function but you can live at 30 percent kidney function for years. Once it drops down to about 15 percent is when they say ‘It’s time.’”

Kerri Abrams and John Nucci cut a ‘Kidney Cake’ in honor of the lifesaving transplant Nucci received last year.

Thirty-five years ago Abrams’ parents, Kim and Al, were political supporters and friends of Nucci. At the time Nucci nor the Abrams could have ever guessed that Kim and Al’s daughter would donate her kidney to help save Nucci’s life nearly four decades later.

Since undergoing a lifesaving kidney transplant Nucci has been making it his life mission to raise awareness and money for the disease that could have ended his life. Last fall in Brighton, Nucci and his family took part in the Walk for Polycystic Kidney Disease. Team Nucci’s goal is to raise $3,500 or more for research. The family plans to do the walk again this year.