My name is Meghan Nixon. Until I was 11, I was living a normal healthy life, playing travel soccer and swimming over the summer. In sixth grade, that all changed, when I was diagnosed with chronic kidney disease. This meant that my kidneys were only functioning 15%. I know you’re thinking what is the functions of my kidneys? I didn’t even know and neither did my parents. The main function of your kidneys is to filter your blood. To replace the function of my kidneys, I was put on dialysis, which filters your blood for you. At first, I was only going to be on dialysis for three months and then hopefully my kidneys were going to come back to full function but that wasn’t the case.

When I first started dialysis at Children’s National, it is was weird to me that I had to travel so long to get treatment. This hospital is really important to the DMV area because it is the only hospital that has children’s dialysis and many of other specialties. I remember walking into my first day being so scared because I had no idea what was going to happen. When I was in the hospital, I had been used to being alone in a room with my treatments. I had no idea what my next eight months would be like. To this day I remember the Children's dialysis nurses opening up their arms to make sure I was as comfortable as possible. There are many different memories that I got to make on dialysis, I definitely have favorites.

All the nurses and staff were amazing. Although I loved all the nurses, I had a favorite that would brighten our three-hour treatment times that were three times a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Her name is Leesa. Leesa would sing and dance while putting on a “one-man show” for us that would end with me and my friend Maryam laughing. If one of us brought a game, she would move a table between me and Maryam, so we could play because we were bound to our chairs. Having a nurse like her will really made my experience better.

Judy was the dialysis child life specialist. Every holiday, we would have new arts and crafts ready to go. On Thanksgiving, we created a tree on the whiteboard, each of us had to write what we were thankful for on a leaf. I said that I was thankful for all the nurses and the support system that I had at Children's because there were so many people working hard to help us get kidneys or even help our kidneys recover. We also made bracelets that were related to our journey on dialysis. Everyone’s bracelet was different which made me think about how each person had a different story with our kidneys.

Children’s also had an art therapist that would come every Wednesday and take up a good amount of my treatment time and it was a really good distraction. I have always loved art so it was really fun. My favorite project was when I made a rose and something for my mom out of clay. I was so excited to come back to dialysis the next Wednesday to paint it.

Today, thanks to Children’s National, I am now a year and six months post kidney transplant. Without the staff at Children’s, I may have had to wait much longer to be where I am today. I now enjoy a safer which is swimming. I have found a new joy in it much like what I saw in soccer.