

TOGETHER — WE SAVE LIVES THROUGH ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION



MIDWEST
TRANSPLANT
NETWORK



Clergy Resource Guide

National Donor Sabbath

This resource guide is a collection of materials intended to help inform and build awareness of organ, tissue, and eye donation among community clergy.

Clergy Resource Guide
National Donor Sabbath



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Letter of Gratitude and a Call to Action

Dear Area Pastors, Clergy, and Faith Leaders,

As a religious leader and healthcare worker, I want to make you aware of an issue that affects persons in the areas where we provide ministry. This healthcare issue now has a waiting list of over 108,000 persons—18 to 19 of whom die every day because there are not enough priceless gifts to go around. The healthcare issue I'm writing to you about is organ and tissue donation.

In my work with families as a Family Services Coordinator at Midwest Transplant Network, I've directly witnessed the impact of your involvement as religious leaders in family care and family values. Consider these heart-searching and humbling statements made by these families at times of great personal loss:

A husband, whose wife of 30 years has a stroke and is now dying because of additional brain injury, tells how she was in the process of getting ready to be listed for a kidney transplant when she had the stroke. "Here we were hoping to receive a gift of life from others and for us now to not choose to give at our time of loss would just be totally wrong."

A father and mother, whose ten-year-old is hit by a car going too fast in their neighborhood, have just been told that their daughter is now brain dead. The parents would later respond, "We have always believed that she was a gift to us from God. We know that there may be other parents going through what we have gone through over the last week, and if our other child needed an organ, we can only hope that someone would do the same thing for us."

And one mother, who says that she cannot understand why all persons are not donors, asks, "Why it is that everyone is always talking about going to heaven but no one wants to die? Plus, don't they know that you can't take your organs to heaven anyway?"

It is in these moments that we are witness to expressions of love for humanity through such a healing empowerment from families. I know when I hear statements of such thoughtful compassion that much is being done in our area to educate and inform about organ and tissue donation. Thank you for your support.

National Donor Sabbath—an initiative by faith communities across the country—focuses on the critical need for organs, tissues, marrow, and blood, and their life-saving and life-enhancing capabilities. National Donor Sabbath participation increases each year through your efforts, and I know you will remember, so, too, does the need for donors. I trust the information contained in this packet helps you as you continue to inform others of the opportunity of giving hope through organ and tissue donation. Please keep up the good work.

With gratitude,

Rev. Isaac H. Ruffin
Family Services and Minority Donation Coordinator



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OrganDonor.Gov

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Donate Life

Midwest Transplant Network



OrganDonor.Gov

Access to U.S. Government Information on
Organ & Tissue Donation and Transplantation



National Donor Sabbath is part of an organ donation initiative launched by the United States Department of Health and Human Services in 1997. Observed on Friday through Sunday two weekends before Thanksgiving, the three-day period seeks to include the days of worship of major religions practiced in the United States.

Donation and transplant professionals collaborate with faith communities to focus on the life-saving and enhancing gifts of organ, tissue, and blood stem cell donation. Faith leaders and congregations participate in services and events to increase awareness of donation and transplantation. Donation helps to heal and strengthen not just recipients and their families, but donor families, friends, colleagues, and the larger community.

Faith leaders are often sought for help with life and death issues. Most religions in the United States support organ and tissue donation directly or support the individual choices of their members. Donation is viewed by many religions as a compassionate and generous gift, and National Donor Sabbath is celebrated in many houses of worship, often with a transplant recipient sharing a story of what it is like to receive that precious gift of another chance at life.

The need for donors increases each year. In August of 2010, nearly 108,000 people were on the organ transplant waiting list, more than 80,000 of them needing a kidney transplant. Each year, thousands of Americans need corneal or other tissue transplants, and an average of 3,000 individuals at any given time are searching for an unrelated blood stem cell donor.

Those who donate organs, tissue, and blood stem cells restore hope and share gifts beyond measure. Transplantation can save lives. If generous individuals and families say yes to donation and register as donors, miracles can happen...

- A young woman who received a heart transplant before she was six months old said at the Federal Government's 2009 National Donor Ceremony, "There's nothing everyone else does that I can't do. I'm just a normal teenager."
- A man diagnosed in his teens with kidney disease, as an adult received a transplant from his adopted brother. Today, they go fishing and camping and are closer friends than ever.
- 1,200 transplant recipients competed in athletic events at the 2010 U.S. Transplant Games thanks to organ, tissue, and blood stem cell donors. The youngest athlete was two years old; the oldest was 85.
- Also at the 2010 Transplant Games, a lung transplant recipient who has traveled the world raising awareness of donation and giving courage to those waiting for a transplant, played the National Anthem at the opening ceremonies...on the bagpipes.

Faith communities and individuals wishing to plan National Donor Sabbath events should contact the Midwest Transplant Network.

For more information on National Donor Sabbath contact:

Rev. Isaac H Ruffin	Family Services & Minority Donation Coordinator	913-261-6177/iruffin@mwtn.org
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What Clergy Can Do

As the Thanksgiving holiday approaches, Donor Sabbath is an opportunity for people of all religious faiths to join together and reflect on the spirit of giving and the need for organ, tissue, and eye donors. As a spiritual leader, you can do the following:

- Observe National Donor Sabbath in the faith community.
- Incorporate the subject of organ, tissue, and eye donation into worship services.
- Organize a sermon, reading or testimonial by a transplant recipient, donor family or living donor.
- Frequently include an article about organ, tissue, and eye donation in the church bulletin.
- Encourage your community to pray for people awaiting transplant and those who have given the gift of life. Request a minute of silence during services.
- Ask a member of your spiritual community who has been affected by donation to write a personal story for your bulletin or religious press.
- Use religious text with references to the value of life, the renewal of life and the value of continuing life.
- Include education and promotion of organ, tissue, and eye donation as an objective for the faith community's health ministry team.
- Write an article in your congregational bulletin or religious press about the benefits of organ, tissue, and eye donation.
- Provide an organ, tissue, and eye donation educational presentation for parishioners.
- Host a donor drive to encourage individuals to join the Missouri or Kansas Donor Registry.
- Recognize families of organ, tissue, and eye donors and remember them with candlelight vigils or other remembrances, such as, "Blossoms of Hope" daffodil or tree seedling plantings.
- Celebrate with transplant recipients.



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What Clergy Can Do continued

- Support and counsel families, when a loved one dies, regarding organ, tissue, and eye donation.
- Make informational brochures available for parishioners to take.
- Provide materials in Spanish, or other available languages.
- Lead prayer to remember those families who suffered loss through death, yet offered life through organ, tissue, and eye donation. Include the thousands of men, women, and children who continue to wait for desperately needed organs and tissues to save or improve their lives.
- Work with community groups, religious organizations and families to promote public awareness of donation and transplantation.
- Lead by example: Let your congregation know that you have joined your state donor registry and discussed the decision with your family.
- Contact Midwest Transplant Network for a speaking engagement fulfilled by one of its Volunteer Ambassadors.

Midwest Transplant Network is available to help you plan a National Donor Sabbath event by providing a program or informational materials. The programs typically feature the personal story of a recipient or donor family, plus a question and answer session.

Midwest Transplant Network also has a variety of age-appropriate programming for children. To request informational materials or a display, or to schedule an educational program, contact Midwest Transplant Network at 1-888-744-4531.





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Area Clergy Donation Champions Speak Out

November marks the celebration of Donor Sabbath. Gathered in worship in your congregation are persons who have or may have transplants to improve or save their lives. In the group may also be persons who have family members and friends who have received the Gift of Life. Next to them there may be persons who have consented to giving gifts of life to others in the midst of sorrow and grief when a loved one died.

It is important for one's religious community to acknowledge and speak words of gratitude for the gifts of life that have been given and to speak words of celebration for the gifts of life that have been received.

Clergy have the opportunity to bear witness to the giving and receiving of these gifts of life within the context of the person's religious community. Loving and Giving are key actions that bear testimony to the religious life. I invite you to consider recognizing Donor Sabbath and the giving and receiving of life in your congregation.

Rev. Sally A. Schwab, M. Div. BCC
Team Leader Spiritual Services
Heartland Health

As a hospital chaplain, I have been an advocate of organ and tissue donation for over twenty years. The role of chaplains and other faith leaders is vital in helping families in the midst of crisis understand that they have the unique opportunity to help others through the miracle of organ donation. This is so important for people of faith—regardless of their religious tradition—for it gives families an opportunity to follow the universal imperative, “Choose life!” Even though the death of a loved one results in an enormous loss, many families find comfort in knowing that something positive occurred in the midst of their tragedy.

While it is easy to recognize the medical and social issues involved with organ and tissue donation and transplantation, I encourage all religious leaders and all people of faith to take time to reflect on the spiritual and theological concerns that might be raised by families. The decisions we make may result in a miracle of life and healing for someone in need.

Rev. Dane Sommer, D. Min. BCC
Director, Chaplaincy Services
The Children's Mercy Hospital and Clinics



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Area Clergy Donation Champions Speak Out continued

My personal journey in the field of tissue and organ donation began 52 years ago when I entered my first year of seminary college. I was invited to donate blood to the local blood bank. It was a new experience for me and I found it to be a rewarding and beneficial one. I came to realize its importance and necessity so I continued with it all through seminary and for many years after ordination. Over the course of many years, I was able to donate 20 gallons of blood to help countless numbers of people in need.

In the course of 42 years as a hospital chaplain at a Level One Trauma Center, I have assisted and counseled numerous families in making decisions regarding organ and tissue donation, as well as anatomical gifts for medical research. I have also served on advisory and ethics committees in the hospital and the community.

However, this topic has become very personal. In 1986 my youngest brother died after being on kidney dialysis for a couple of years. He was never a candidate for transplantation. A few years ago, I was diagnosed with Type II diabetes which eventually led to end stage renal disease. We anticipated the day that I would eventually need kidney dialysis. A duodenal ulcer which necessitated a blood transfusion of 4 units was the event that precipitated that day.

After 16 months on renal dialysis, I was fortunate to receive a successful kidney transplant. I am deeply grateful to my donor and her family for this precious gift of new life for me and my ministry. It has enabled me to reach countless numbers of people who share my health issues and the general public who are in a position to promote and participate in this life-giving and life-enhancing program.

Rev. Jerry L. Spencer, MA, NACC
Catholic Chaplain
University of Kansas Hospital

Saving a life Is a MUST in Jewish tradition, and so to consider organ donation is not only permissible, but rather it is a mitzvah, a commandment!

Rabbi Jonathan Rudnick
Jewish Community Chaplain
Jewish Family Services





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Area Clergy Donation Champions Speak Out continued

Acts of kindness and compassion are at the taproot of Buddhism. Everything in this phenomenal world is impermanent and the death of our bodies is the ultimate form of impermanence. Donating your organs after death to enable another sentient being to live is considered the ultimate act of compassion. Sogyal Rinpoche, in his book *The Tibetan Book of Living & Dying*, states “Organ donation is an extremely positive action. As long as it is truly the wish of the dying person, it will not harm in any way the consciousness that is leaving the body. On the contrary, this final act of generosity accumulates good karma.” However, leaving advance directives to let your family members know of your intention is vital.

Lama Chuck Stanford
Spiritual & Executive Director
Rime Buddhist Center

“...If anyone slew a person...it would be as if he slew the whole people, and if any one saved a life it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people...” *The Holy Qur’an*, 5.32

Islamic life considerations are ideally based on the Holy Qur’an and the exemplary life of Prophet Muhammad, prayers and peace upon him. During the Prophet’s time 1500 years ago there was no organ transplant technology. In the absence of both specific and general mandatory religious requirement “to” or prohibition “against,” each individual Muslim remains free to decide to seek or give organs. A “both/and” logic supports a reasoning process where both positions are “correct.” The pro and con criteria align with authentic Islamic sources, personal needs, and use of a mutual consultation process to navigate the particular circumstances. Due attention is given to informed consent and conscientious review of consequences. The aid of a local Imam, Islamic prayer leader, and trusted medical professionals can help persons exemplify the Islamic tradition of wedding faith and science. Islam supports commitment, saving life, mercy, charity, generosity, education, and medical treatment.

Imam Taalib-ud-Din al-Ansare
Associate Supervisor, ACPE, Inc.
Chaplain Supervisor, Research Medical Center



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Area Clergy Donation Champions Speak Out continued

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13 KJV). The fundamental prevailing truth is that the Bible teaches it is more blessed to give than receive. Our Lord being the greatest example by giving His life so that we may receive eternal life (a quality of life) through Him; He chose to sustain life. What better way to emulate this truth in the physical realm than by becoming an organ or tissue donor?

As an advocate of organ and tissue donation, I find it vital in helping families in the midst of crisis understand that they have a unique opportunity to help others through the miracle of organ donation. I encourage all religious leaders and all people of faith to take time and reflect on the physical and spiritual imperative of sustaining quality of life so that others may continue to live useful and productive lives for God and mankind. It is truly more blessed to give than receive.

Nadie tiene mayor amor que este, un hombre dé su vida por sus amigos. La verdad fundamental que la Biblia enseña es esto, es mas bendecido uno cuando dá que cuando recibe. Nuestro Señor siendo el mejor ejemplo en dando Su vida para que nosotros recibieramos vida eterna (una vida de calidad) por medio de el; El eligio sustentar una vida. Que maravilloso modo de emular esta verdad en una forma fisica en siendo un donante de organos o tisú.

Como abogado de donaciones de organo y tisú. Encuentro que es vital en ayudar familias en medio de una crisis para entender que tienen una oportunidad unica para ayudar otros por un milagro de donar organos.

Yo animo a todos los lideres religiosos y toda persona de fe que tomen el tiempo y reflejen sobre la imperativa fisica y espiritual de sostener la calidad de vida para que asi otros puedan continuar vidas útiles y productivas para Dios y la humanidad.

Verdaderamente es mas bendecido dar que recibir.

Samuel Olivas
Senior Pastor
Amazing Grace Baptist Church





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Area Clergy Donation Champions Speak Out continued

As a minister and chaplain I have long advocated for the importance of organ donation. It's a very different and more personal experience though when one's family member is involved. When my dad died a little over two years ago there was a sense of peace as my family all agreed to donate tissue or organs if possible. We wanted others to be helped by the life of this wonderful person we love so much. It is something positive to do in a very difficult time.

Little did we know that in a little over nine months from then my brother H.O. would experience a massive heart attack at the school where he had taught kindergarten for years. He was extremely critical, requiring the use of a BIVAD machine (an LVAD was not sufficient). The doctors and nurses fought hard to save his life and surgeries were performed to stop massive bleeding (I was told he received about 50 units of blood products and fluid in one day as he had two emergency surgeries). I was sobbing and had to reach out to others to pray with me during these emergency surgeries. It was at this time my brother began to make a miraculous turnaround as he was stabilized enough for a heart transplant that some grieving family generously provided. No doubt that family was devastated in their loss, but they chose to help someone else in their tragedy.

My brother received a new heart and is now able to walk a mile and a half and do normal life activities to the point where one would not know if they were to see him all that he has been through. I am so grateful to that family who chose to donate life, grateful for the doctors, nurses, staff, and MTN staff who helped to make this miracle possible, and grateful to God for my brother's healing. All of those involved are truly agents of God's healing grace. Thank you all.

Tim Lytle
Chaplain

Via Christi Hospital on St. Francis



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On Giving and Receiving

By Chaplain David E. Carl

The Mother and Father of the 16-year-old daughter stood helplessly at the bedside. Time was running out. Her precious child had been waiting for a heart transplant for months now. Prayers and hopes seemed to be falling on deaf ears. Only a matter of minutes now and she will take her last breath on this earth. If only there were miracles to be found....

It was the worst news they could have ever heard. The knock at the door was a State Trooper. He had a devastating report that their son had been involved in a terrible auto accident. This tore through their hearts. Rushing to the trauma center they were further tortured with the diagnosis that this vibrant teenager could not recover from the injuries sustained in the head-on crash. After letting this sink in for an hour or so there was a knock at the waiting room door. Someone came to ask if they would like to help make a miracle happen for someone else by donating their child's organs....

Each day in the United States 18 persons die and literally thousands of others have their lives compromised because they do not receive an organ. It is not that we do not have enough eligible donors; it is more that we in health care have not done a good job of educating the public about this desperate health need and the noble cause of electing to lay down one's life for another at the time of imminent death. Many of us may have never thought about it at all. I can honestly say that the last place I want anyone to have to think about this for the first time is when a loved one has just been pronounced dead at a local hospital. Hence the formation of Clergy for Organ Procurement Education began (www.clergyorganprocurementeducation.org) which is devoted to asking all clergy of all faiths to help educate congregants about this national crisis.

As already alluded to above it is not uncommon at this Level 1 Trauma Center that a loved one would be pronounced dead due to injuries resulting from a Motor Vehicle Accident or some other tragic scenario. We as God's children are not protected from the hurts and pains in life because of our faith stance or denominational linkage. Bad things do happen to good people. A study of the pain and suffering of the Saints should give us a heads-up about this. When it does we have opportunity to make good come out of the tragic and seeming meaninglessness of the situation. Our departed loved one can become a hero to someone else facing life and death circumstances. This is easier to do if we know ahead of time how our loved one viewed the donation of his/her organs should this circumstance arise. There are not many forums within which to speak about this. Too often it comes as a surprise topic following some minutes or hours after the pronouncement of death. The congregation is the perfect place to address this healthcare need and help prepare congregants for this type of crisis. Theological principles of giving and receiving, laying down one's life for another, etc., all naturally tie to this effort.



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On Giving and Receiving continued

The challenge is to talk this out with our families and friends, clergy and co-congregants before tragedy strikes. My family is clear that if something happens to me today that my desire is to donate whatever I can to assist another in need. They do not have to wonder whatsoever about what my wishes are. And they can support me even at the time of my death in helping to insure this happens. And if my clergy is on-board with this decision too then all the better support would be there for my family in a time filled with anxiety and grief. I would even go so far as to suggest that the registry for congregants of each church might not only carry information about birthdates, baptisms, and confirmations, but also these records could well carry a brief line that indicates I want to be or do not want to be an organ donor should the question become real. I would guess that any congregation would have in its membership someone who has received an organ transplant or knows someone who has. They are living human documents who can speak volumes without uttering a word about what it means to still be alive and have a different quality of life. There are also some congregations blessed with clergy who themselves have received a heart, a liver, a kidney, or another organ that enables them to go on preaching and teaching and bringing leadership to ministry. There is even a minister or two in our midst who have donated kidneys or part of their liver so that another might have a more abundant life.

I believe to the degree we give our attention to this matter in our congregations we will be less likely driven by emotions alone at times of imminent death and become more balanced in our decision-making process. Please feel free to invite a Chaplain, a Nurse, a Social Worker, a Physician to come speak at a class or service. Most hospitals have a speaker's bureau ready and willing to provide such. There is a premise in our Transplant Center at Carolinas Medical Center that most people would elect to donate when given the chance because it is the right thing to do. Further when given an opportunity to save a life, most persons would choose to do so. And I am further encouraged by studies that indicate how families grieve better when they choose to act on the tragic death of their relative by making something good come out of something senseless.

The Pastor walked to the pulpit for the first time in months. Everyone knew he had been deathly ill. It was a heart transplant that saved his life. After stating his gratitude to the congregation for the support and prayers they afforded him and his family during this difficult time, he went on to express an immense appreciation for the donor and family whose gift of a heart helped him resume his pastoral duties. With tears in his eyes He could be heard to say, "I now know more fully what the Words 'create in me a clean heart, O God' mean both physically and spiritually."

Giving and receiving becomes quite miraculous at times such as these.



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Clergy's Role When a Loved One Dies

Adapted from the Clergy's Role in Donation by Charles H. Chandler, D. Min.

The clergy are part of the health team: Surgeons, primary physicians, nurses, medical technicians, procurement coordinators, and clergy all have specific roles to play in relationship to organ, tissue, and eye donation when a loved one dies. The clergy are an essential member of the team for various reasons. Why?

They have a role as a spiritual leader: The clergy person can clarify theological and ethical questions which the family may have. They can also provide comfort to the family by affirming their decision. The clergy person's presence represents the presence of God. This, in itself, provides comfort.

They have a relationship to the family: The congregational clergy knows the family and usually will have earned their trust. They often look to him or her for guidance in making decisions at this stage, being too frightened or too overwhelmed to stand alone. The clergy's responsibility is to the family. He or she becomes their advocate. Since the clergy person is often already with the family, he or she can restate and interpret what was said by the medical staff. The clergy is the member of the team with the most training in relating to the family.

They have an ability to create awareness: The clergy can address subjects such as organ, tissue, and eye donation in sermons, lectures, and in pastoral counseling. This helps prepare families in advance. Clergy can be attitudinal change agents. The clergy person may know the donor's wishes because of previous discussions with him or her. Sharing that information can lighten the burden of the family's decision.

They have a relationship to the medical staff: By working together, the entire team can develop trust and a spirit of cooperation, with all members learning their roles and carrying them out to the best of their abilities.





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Biblical Perspectives

Each faith leader has his or her unique way of sermon preparation and delivery. With that understanding and appreciation, the following suggestions are given as ideas.

Genesis 2:26-31 - Responsible power

In the moment of our creation we were given power over all things. Responsible use of this power would include using our own bodies to give life.

Matthew 10:1-8 - The Imperative to Heal

“Heal the sick ... freely ye have received, freely give.”

Death need not be the final declaration of our lives. We can choose to donate vital organs to enable as many as eight people to live and tissue to help more than 50 others. The decision to donate organs at the end of one’s life is the beginning of healing for many others.

Mark 14:3-9 - The Sweet Fragrance of Sacrificial Giving

A self-indulgent Judas Iscariot criticizes the generosity of a woman for breaking open an expensive alabaster vase and using its contents, a priceless perfumed oil, to anoint Jesus. Her sacrificial giving is praised by our Lord and her deed declared a memorial. Through donation we unselfishly pour out the fragrant gift of life upon those awaiting a second chance at life through transplantation.

Luke 6:31-38 - Give to others and God will give to you.

This text could be explored as to the command to give to others and various ways that we can give, including the giving of our bodies.

Luke 10:27 - Donation: The Act of Love

The greatest commandment is to love others as we love ourselves. Although we are willing to accept organ transplants to save our own lives, we are often unwilling to donate organs to save the lives of others. Our Lord demonstrated with His own life how even in sorrow, love enables us to embrace the needs of others. Self-seeking is self-destructive, but to empty ourselves in loving service shall make us a lasting blessing to the world.

Luke 14:12-14 - Giving without reward

In this text we are told to give to those who are in need without thought of reward from them. The need for organ, tissue, and eye donation is great.

John 3:16-17 - God gave His Son

God gave His Son to us so that we might live in eternal life. Can we not give of our organs and tissues when we no longer have need of them so that others may live in this temporary world?



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Biblical Perspectives continued

John 8:32 - **The Liberating Truth**

“...and the truth shall make you free.” Most refusals to donate are influenced by misconceptions, myths, and mistrust of the medical community. Consequently, people are perishing due to the lack of knowledge. If we would seek the truth about organ donation, we might embrace the gift of life. The truth will liberate us not only to accept it, but to give it.

John 11:25 - **I am the resurrection and the life.**

I Corinthians 15:35-38 - The spiritual body

These texts could be used to talk about resurrection, emphasizing that in the resurrection the physical body is transformed into a spiritual body. Therefore, the gift of organs and tissue does not affect the ability of one to be resurrected.

Romans 8:28-29 - **Seeking the good**

This text could be used to show how, in the midst of tragic circumstances of sudden death, God is seeking with us to find good. Donation may be one sign of good in an otherwise sudden or senseless death.

The following scriptures are selected because of their message of giving, healing and understanding of the relationship between human beings. They can be used as calls to worship, responsive readings, and affirmations of faith. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but is a starting point for worship resources and possible sermon ideas.

Hebrew Bible

Genesis 2:20-30

Leviticus 1:7

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Psalms 41

Psalms 107

Psalms 111

Psalms 116

Psalms 145

Psalms 147

Ecclesiastes 3:1-17

Isaiah 35:1-6

Ezekiel 37

Bone transplant: A rib taken from Adam to give life to Eve

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

“Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.”

Images of a healing Lord

“Consider the steadfast love of the Lord.”

“I give thanks to the Lord.”

“O Lord, I pray, save my life!”

“The Lord is gracious and merciful.”

“Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving.”

“For everything there is a season...”

“Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees...the eyes of the blind shall be opened...”

The Valley of Dry Bones: “These bones shall live.”



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Biblical Perspectives continued

New Testament

- Matthew 5:7 “Blessed are the merciful.”
- Matthew 7:7 “Ask ... seek ... knock.”
- Matthew 7:12 “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you...”
- Matthew 10:8 “Heal the sick ... freely ye have received, freely give.”
- Matthew 25: 31-46 Caring for the stranger
- Mark 9:47 We can enter heaven without having every part of our bodies present.
- Luke 4:16-21 “...recovery of sight to the blind.”
- Luke 6:37-38 “Give and it will be given to you.”
- John 3:16-17 “God so loved the world that He gave...”
- John 10:10 “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”
- John 15:12-17 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”
- II Corinthians 9:6-8 “Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
- 1 John 4:11 “Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.”
- Revelation 21:4-5 In eternity we will not need our earthly bodies: “Former things will pass away, all things will be made new.”

Zen Buddhist Sacred Texts

Zen Buddhists – The ‘Jataka Tales’ are ancient stories/myths/accounts in which selflessness and generosity are the hallmarks. There may also be suitable references in the ‘Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha.’

Islamic/Qur'an Sacred Texts

There are no specific texts in the Qur'an or the books of hadith, the Prophet's sayings, which speak directly to this point or could be interpreted in such a manner that could be taken as an overall permission for a recent medical development such as, donation/transplantation. The religion of Islam strongly believes in the principle of saving human lives. According to A. Sachedina in his Transplantation Proceedings article, Islamic Views on Organ Transplantation, "The majority of Muslim scholars, belonging to various schools of Islamic law, have invoked the principle of priority of saving human life and have permitted organ transplantation as a necessity to procure that noble end." There is the statement that “whoever saves a life, it is as if he had saved all humankind.” This being the case, it then becomes a matter concerning which current qualified scholars must give a ruling, and there is general agreement that organ/tissue donation is permissible.



Give thanks. Give life.

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Responsive Readings

Responsive Reading from Isaiah 40:31

They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength,
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.

Responsive Reading from Psalm 116

I love the Lord, because my voice and my supplications were heard.
Because the Lord listened to me, I therefore will call on the Lord as long as I live.
The sorrows of death encompassed me, and the pains of hell took hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow.
Then called I on the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech you to deliver my soul.
Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful.
The Lord preserves the simple: I was brought low, and God helped me.
Return to your rest O my soul; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.
For God has delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.
What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits toward me?
I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.
Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the saints.
O Lord, truly I am your servant; I am your servant and the child of your handmaiden: you have loosened my bonds. I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord.





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Suggested Hymns and Songs

The following list of hymns is a start in your efforts to locate appropriate hymns from your own religious tradition that bring the message of hope and giving that organ, tissue, and eye donation and transplantation provide.

Amazing Grace

O Son of Man, Thou Modest Known

Blest be the Tie that Binds

O That Will Be Glory

God Be With You

O Thou Who art the Shepherd

God Leads Us Along

O Young and Fearless Prophet

God Will Take Care of You

Oh, To Be Like Thee

Have Thine Own Way, Lord

Open My Eyes, That I May See

Heavenly Father, Bless Me Now

Rescue the Perishing

Hope of the World

Sweet Hour of Prayer

I Need You to Survive

Take My Life and Let it be Consecrated

I'll Praise My Maker While I've Breath

Take My Life, And Let It Be

Immortal Love, Forever Full

The Voice of God is Calling

It Is Well With My Soul

There'll Be Shouting

Jesus, Lord, We Look to Thee

To God be the Glory

Jesus, Lover of My Soul

We Give Thee but Thine Own

Jesus, United by Thy Grace

We'll Never Say Goodbye

Jewels

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

Lift up Our Hearts, O King of Kings

What Wondrous Love is This

Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service

Wonderful Peace

O God, Whose Will is Life

Wonderful Story of Love



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Prayer of Intercession and Petition *A Litany for All Donors and Recipients*

L: Let us pray. Good and gracious God, each day is an occasion for giving thanks for life. But on this day we pause to thank You for particular lives.

P: We give You thanks for compassionate people who are willing to be donors. Bless those who donate life. May their gifts bring others the golden light of hope. Comfort each donor's family with the knowledge that their loved-one gave life, even at the end.

L: The number of kindly people grows each year. But the number of people on waiting lists grows faster than the supply.

P: Extend Your grace to the children, the women, and the men who wait. Be with their families who fear, and give them Your peace.

L: Be with those who today will get the call that a suitable donor has been found.

P: Be with those who today will finish the fight, and complete their race. Grant them the prize in Your Kingdom that eluded them here on earth.

L: Forgive us for the coldness of our hearts. We don't see their faces, we don't know their names.

P: But You, O God, see them and know them. Remove from us our hearts of stone, and transplant within us hearts of flesh.

L: Be merciful, O God, and let our hearts beat for someone else. Let our lungs breathe for someone else.

P: Let our eyes give sight. Let our bones give strength.

L: Let us be the Samaritan who cared enough to make a difference, who bound wounds, and brought comfort.

P: Let us be the companions who carried their friend to the feet of Jesus for healing.

L: Let us follow the Lord's example, who laid His own life down so that others would live.

P: Let us know the joy that comes from seeing a person's life change for the better. Give us the opportunity to renew life for those who suffer.

L: And now with the confidence of the children of God, let us pray the prayer our Lord taught us.



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Prayer

Here is a sample prayer that clergy members may like to incorporate in a service for the Donor Recognition Program. It may also be included as a written prayer in a weekly bulletin.

O God,

We thank Thee for the Gift of Life. May we always cherish this gift and protect it in the cradle of responsibility.

May we understand that our bodies are the houses of Thy infinite spirit.

The mortal house is a temporary abode, but within is the brilliant light of eternity.

Every chamber is a repository of vitality. Each is a place of life. Together, they form a Temple of God.

Amen.

Benediction

Here is a sample Benediction a clergy member may like to include at the end of a Donor Recognition Program.

As we go from this House of Worship, may we take with us the words and the spirit that our faith offers us.

Here, we learn of and sing praises for the Gift of Life. We declare that while we live our bodily form is the vessel that receives God's light. May we be worthy bearers of that light in bodies which are strong and healthy.

From our eyes, may the light shine brightly so that in the darkness we may see the needs of others.

Through our ears, may we hear beyond the noise of self-interest to the calls for help from those in need.

May our hearts beat with compassion and our arms be strong in reaching out to lift up those who stumble.

And after life has gone from us, may we still remain the messengers of Thy Light. May the sparks housed within us, because of our offering of love, become the flame of life for others.

Amen.



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National Donor Sabbath



Bulletin Text Samples

Give the gift of life. Date is National Donor Sabbath. Our congregation supports organ and tissue donation as the gift of life and the expression of highest humanitarian ideals. We ask that all members of congregation consider this gift in the name of Christ, who gave His life so that we might have life in its fullest. For more information, call Midwest Transplant Network at 913-262-1668 or 1-888-744-4531, or e-mail info@mwn.org.

Our congregation supports and encourages organ and tissue donation as the ultimate gift of one person to another. Date is National Donor Sabbath. Take a moment to discuss organ and tissue donation with your family. Please consider making this great gift in God's name. For more information, call Midwest Transplant Network at 913-262-1668 or 1-888-744-4531, or e-mail info@mwn.org.

To think of others in our hours of grief and sorrow is truly compassionate and selfless. Please consider the gift of life—organ and tissue donation. Our congregation supports this gift in the spirit of love and generosity. Remember to discuss your feelings about organ and tissue donation with your family. For more information on how you can be listed on the state donor registry, call Midwest Transplant Network at 913-262-1668 or 1-888-744-4531, or e-mail info@mwn.org.

How do we respond to the blessings God has bestowed on us? How do we deal responsibly with the gifts God has given us? To think only of ourselves is to squander our lives. But to respond gratefully means we praise God with our lips and our actions. To respond gratefully is to realize that all of life is God's, and we are called to care for it and share it. With these thoughts, we ask you to consider giving so that others may live. Give the gift of life—organ and tissue donation. For more information on how you can be listed on the state donor registry, call Midwest Transplant Network at 913-262-1668 or 1-888-744-4531, or e-mail info@mwn.org.

Our congregation recognizes the life-giving benefits of organ and tissue donation and encourages its members to sign and carry donor cards. By doing so, they attest to their commitment upon death to giving organs and tissues to those in need as part of their ministry to others in the name of Christ, who gave his life so that we might live. For more information, call Midwest Transplant Network at 913-262-1668 or 1-888-744-4531, or e-mail info@mwn.org.





Clergy Resource Guide

National Donor Sabbath

Bulletin Text Samples continued

Consider how simple acts may change the lives of others who have great need. Sign your organ donor card today; that's a simple act. In signing that card, you are demonstrating a willingness to give life to others after you no longer live. Think of it for others in need. For more information, call Midwest Transplant Network at 913-262-1668 or 1-888-744-4531, or e-mail info@mwn.org.

Thousands of us are in need of vital organs and tissues. For many, the chance to live a full life won't come unless all of us consider organ and tissue donation. Discuss organ and tissue donation after worship with your family and friends. Help others find a chance to live a full life. Share your life, share your decision. For more information on how you can be listed on the state donor registry, call Midwest Transplant Network at 913-262-1668 or 1-888-744-4531, or e-mail info@mwn.org.

For many bright, young, talented people, the chance to live a full life rests with all of us, for some of them will die unless we consider making a great gift. Those in need of organs and tissues number in the thousands. An untimely death awaits those who do not receive organs and tissues that now are simply wasted in death. After worship, talk with your family and friends. Think about giving a full life to others when your own life ends. Consider a great gift; be an organ and tissue donor. For more information, call Midwest Transplant Network at 913-262-1668 or 1-888-744-4531, or e-mail info@mwn.org.

Every year thousands die because a virtually free gift is too seldom given. Those who die are bright, young, talented people with years of living ahead...except for organ failure. The gift of life—organs and tissues—is one that costs only the decision to give, yet that decision can literally mean life or death to someone in need. Organ failure could affect us all. All of us should consider giving organs and tissues after our lives have been lived. For more information on how you can be listed on the state donor registry, call Midwest Transplant Network at 913-262-1668 or 1-888-744-4531, or e-mail info@mwn.org.

Make a miracle. Be an organ, tissue, and eye donor. Our congregation supports organ, tissue, and eye donation as the gift of life and the expression of the highest humanitarian ideals. We ask that all members of the congregation consider this gift of life in the name of Christ, who gave His life so that we might have life in its fullest. For more information, call Midwest Transplant Network at 913-262-1668 or 1-888-744-4531, or e-mail info@mwn.org.



Give thanks. Give life.

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Bulletin Text Samples continued

Almost 108,000 people nationwide currently wait for a life-saving organ transplant. More than 3,000 of those patients are in the Kansas/western Missouri area. For many the chance to live a full life won't come unless all of us consider organ, tissue, and eye donation. Discuss organ, tissue, and eye donation after worship with your family and friends. For more information, call Midwest Transplant Network at 913-262-1668 or 1-888-744-4531, or e-mail info@mwn.org.

Consider how a simple act may change the lives of others who have great need. Join the state Donor Registry and make sure you let your family know you've made the decision to donate life. That's a simple act. By signing up on the Registry, you are demonstrating a willingness to give life to others after you no longer live. Think of it for others in need. For more information, call Midwest Transplant Network at 913-262-1668 or 1-888-744-4531, or e-mail info@mwn.org.

After worship, discuss organ and tissue donation with family and friends. Let them know that you understand the need for organs and tissues among those who rely on transplantation to live. For us, the only cost is giving, for the gift is life. Share your life; share your decision.





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Inspirational Writings

To Remember Me

The day will come when my body will lie upon a white sheet neatly tucked under four corners of a mattress located in a hospital busily occupied with the living and the dying. At a certain moment a doctor will determine that my brain has ceased to function and that, for all intents and purposes, my life has stopped.

When that happens, do not attempt to instill artificial life into my body by the use of a machine. And don't call this my deathbed. Let it be called the Bed of Life, and let my body be taken from it to help others lead fuller lives.

Give my sight to the man who has never seen a sunrise, a baby's face, or love in the eyes of a woman.

Give my heart to a person whose own heart has caused nothing but endless days of pain.

Give my blood to the teenager, who was pulled from the wreckage of his car, so that he might live to see his grandchildren play.

Give my kidneys to one who depends on a machine to exist from week to week.

Take my bones, every muscle, every fiber and nerve in my body and find a way to make a crippled child walk.

Explore every corner of my brain. Take my cells, if necessary, and let them grow so that, someday, a speechless boy will shout at the crack of a bat and a deaf girl will hear the sound of rain against her window.

Burn what is left of me and scatter the ashes to the winds to help the flowers grow.

If you must bury something, let it be my faults, my weaknesses and all prejudice against my fellow man.

Give my sins to the devil.....Give my soul to God.

If, by chance, you wish to remember me, do it with a kind deed or word to someone who needs you.

If you do all I have asked, I will live forever.

—Robert N. Test



Give thanks. Give life.

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Inspirational Writings continued

Bequest

*So white. Now I lay me down upon a sheet so white.
No more. My brain can hear your voice no more.
But wait.
These eyes,
This heart,
This kidney;
These bones, skin, blood, nerve
Still can serve.
As Christ gave His body and His blood for me,
Now let me give this gift to thee.
Take these eyes and let them see.
Let this skin feel again and be.
Accept this organ to make her whole,
This blood to speed him on his way,
Then Blessed Lord, receive my soul.*

—Herbert Nelson

Somewhere

A poem by Susan Morgan for her son, Drew

*Somewhere, your eyes still see the earth below...
and the skies above
Somewhere, your heart still beats even stronger
full of love
Somewhere, your legs can still play, run and dance
Somewhere, you've given SOMEONE...
a second chance
And...
Somewhere, when I'm touched by those who,
again, can live and see
Somewhere, I know your life goes on...
and you're still here with me...
Somewhere*





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National Donor Sabbath

Inspirational Writings continued

A Parable of Grace

It's a sunny autumn day. The light of the morning sun is shining through the windows of an intensive care unit into patient rooms filled with IV stands and ventilators and heart monitors. In one room, the light reveals the jaundiced face of a 45-year-old teacher dying of liver failure. Next door, an ashen-faced 62-year-old grandfather needs a new heart. Three doors down, the light falls on the face of a 27-year-old mother who gasps for breath with ruined lungs.

None of them has walked in the light for weeks. They are doing all they can just to live another day.

They are waiting for a gift. It is a priceless gift. It is priceless because of what it will give them—new life and health and time with their families—and also because of what it costs—the life of someone else. How do you pray for a new heart when you know that it comes from someone else's death?

In another hospital, a family grieves. Someone they love has died and the autumn sunlight is swallowed in darkness.

Someone tells them of the possibility of donating their loved one's organs. They say it would be just like their loved one to want to help someone else. They talk about sparing some other family the pain that they are experiencing. So they choose to give the priceless gift to nameless strangers.

A 45-year-old teacher receives a liver, a 62-year-old grandfather receives a heart, and a 27-year-old mother receives new lungs. They all pray for a grieving family they may never know.

As a hospital chaplain, I have been with all of these people more times than I can count. It is a miracle for those who were dying, and also a miracle for those who give. What a profound and wonderful miracle. What a parable of grace.

Chaplain Joel De Fehr
Director, Pastoral Care
Integrus Southwest Medical Center
Source: www.organdonor.gov



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Presidential Proclamation

National Donate Life Month



As Americans, we can demonstrate our commitment to one another in the most difficult of circumstances through organ, tissue, stem cell, and blood donation. During National Donate Life Month, we honor donors who provide others with a second chance for a healthy life and encourage more Americans to share this precious gift.

Today, over 100,000 Americans await donation on the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network waiting list. Many will receive a lifesaving transplant, but, for some, help will not come fast enough. Whether they are coping with kidney failure or recovering from severe injuries, these individuals' lives depend on the compassion of a loved one or a complete stranger. Across our country, we face a shortage of donors and an urgent need for help. We must respond with the spirit of generosity that has always defined our national character.

Each organ or tissue donor can save many lives, and becoming one is simple: join your State's donor registry, indicate your decision on your driver's license, and inform loved ones of your decision. There is no age limit for donors, and because some conditions and blood types are more common in certain ethnic and racial populations, the Department of Health and Human Services especially encourages minorities to consider donation.

Visit OrganDonor.gov to learn more about the urgent need for donors and to find resources on how to donate. Together, we can save lives and give hope to countless American families.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 2010 as National Donate Life Month. I call upon health care professionals, volunteers, educators, government agencies, faith-based and community groups, and private organizations to join forces to boost the number of organ, tissue, blood, and stem cell donors throughout our Nation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand ten, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-fourth.

BARACK OBAMA



Give thanks. Give life.



Missouri and Kansas Recent Legislative History

“Show Me Your Heart” Missouri

Midwest Transplant Network *Lifelines* Newsletter
Fall 2009

On August 28, 2008, a new Missouri law went into effect allowing residents to provide their full legal consent to become organ and tissue donors. Prior to the passage of this legislation, Missouri residents could only express their intent to become organ or tissue donors following their death, but ultimately, the final decision was left to the patient’s next-of-kin.

Midwest Transplant Network, together with other organ donation organizations across Missouri, is rolling out a new campaign in support of the revised Uniform Anatomical Gift Act



(UAGA), and has also launched a new website to support this initiative. www.donatelifemissouri.com is dedicated to informing Missouri residents about the new law. The site features donor and recipient stories, shares ongoing news and offers information about the process for completing the consent form. In addition, visitors to the site can connect with the campaign through Facebook and YouTube, and share information with friends.

The theme of the campaign is “Show Me Your Heart” which encourages people to “show their heart” by joining the organ and tissue registry. The campaign will be featured in a number of locations throughout

the state of Missouri, including: interstate billboards; Division of Motor Vehicle bureaus; the new website; and in print materials.

In 2008, Midwest Transplant Network and several legislative champions worked hard to ensure the passage of the legislation, which provided a number of important revisions to the UAGA. The Act, originally passed in 1968 and enacted by all 50 states, had not been updated since 1987.

Missourians who wish to obtain a registration form for the Missouri Organ Donor Registry can visit www.donatelifemissouri.com or call the Division of Health and Senior Services toll free at 1-888-497-4564.



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Missouri and Kansas Recent Legislative History continued

Kansas Organ and Tissue Donor Registry is Now First-Person Consent

Midwest Transplant Network *Lifelines* Newsletter
Summer 2010

Effective July 1, 2010, House Bill 2486 designated the Kansas statewide organ and tissue donor registry as first-person consent. Previously, the registry was intent only. The change to first-person consent means that an individual's decision to donate (also referred to as authorization) is legally-binding, and no one else may reverse that decision if the individual is at least 18 years old.



“The new donor registry laws in Kansas are a milestone in fulfilling Midwest Transplant Network’s mission,” said Rob Linderer, Midwest Transplant Network (MTN) CEO. “Now, a Kansan who chooses to be an organ and tissue donor can be assured that this decision cannot be overruled by anyone else. A Kansan who wants to give the gift of life in his or her own death is even more empowered to do so.”

The new Kansas registry will begin operating this fall. All Kansans who have previously signed up in the intent registry will need to re-register through the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), or the Kansas Donor Registry website after that date. However, a Kansas driver’s license with the heart donor symbol or properly signed back or other legally-binding documents, such as a will or signed donor card, still constitute first-person consent to be an organ and tissue donor.

ORGAN DONOR ♥

MTN thanks Governor Mark Parkinson, hospitals across the state, and the many organ and tissue donation advocates who voiced their support and worked hard to help us update Kansas donor registry laws. Kansans are now empowered to make their own personal decisions regarding donation and know that those decisions will be respected and honored.

If you have questions or would like more information, please visit www.mwtn.org, or call Erin Gregory, MTN marketing and public relations specialist, at (913) 261-6185.





Kansas and Missouri Gifts of Life

Lung Transplant Gives Local Man ‘New Lease on Life’

By Emily Younker

Joplin Globe

April 17, 2010

CARL JUNCTION, Mo.—When Lynn Gardner was diagnosed 10 years ago with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis—a fatal disease that causes scarring of the lungs—he was told he had three years to live.

His best, and perhaps only option, for survival was to receive new lungs, his doctors told him.

“When it came right down to it, it was either get the transplant or die,” Gardner said. “I probably would have died in 2004 if I hadn’t gotten that.”

Gardner received a double-lung transplant in 2004 and has since defied all life expectancies given to him by doctors. He is scheduled to speak Tuesday at the Celebration of Life service honoring organ and tissue donors and recipients at St. John’s Regional Medical Center.

Although the transplant and the days immediately afterward are fuzzy in Gardner’s memory, he clearly remembers the months leading up to it. His health was rapidly declining because of the disease.

Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis is the scarring or thickening of the lungs, which leads to decreased oxygen flow to vital organs, according to the National Institutes of Health. The disease has no known cause or cure.

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, a division of the National Institutes of Health, reports that approximately 200,000 Americans have idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. About 50,000 new cases are diagnosed each year, primarily in people who are older than 50 years, according to the institute.

Even with his diagnosis, Gardner continued teaching classes at Ozark Christian College, and though his colleagues tried to make it a comfortable experience, it was strenuous.

“I coughed a lot, and I couldn’t do stairs, so they made sure my classroom was in the same building my office was,” he said. “I couldn’t stand for 50 minutes, so they provided chairs. ... The school was really good to me.”



Give thanks. Give life.

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Kansas and Missouri Gifts of Life continued

'He Was So Weak'

In April 2004, the Gardners moved temporarily to St. Louis to be closer to Barnes Jewish Hospital, where the transplant would occur, and to wait for a match. It was a rough time for Gardner and his wife, Barbara.

“Just before the transplant, I didn’t know if he was going to make it until the call came because he was so weak,” she said.

That call—alerting Gardner of a match—came in June, just two months after the Gardners had arrived in St. Louis.

“Our daughter had asked what I wanted for Father’s Day, and I said, ‘New lungs,’” Gardner recalled. “That night, about 12:30, we got the call.”

On June 15, 2004, Gardner received a double-lung transplant, and the couple moved back to their home in Carl Junction in October of that year.

Gardner said the first year after his transplant was difficult. He went back to St. Louis at least 10 times for several hospitalizations, minor rejections of the lungs and one surgery.

'I Have Young, Healthy Lungs'

At his one-year anniversary, he wrote a thank-you letter to the donor’s family, though he doesn’t know who his donor was.

“All they told me was I have young, healthy lungs,” he said. “If the family wanted me to know (who the donor was), they’d let me know.”

The next several years were smoother for Gardner. He retired from Ozark Christian College in 2006 to focus more on his writing. A director of College Press Publishing Co. since 1981, Gardner has written six books and has a new book—tentatively titled “*Commending and Defending Christian Faith: An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*”—due this fall. His next projects include helping a friend write a book and writing two articles for “*The Lookout*” magazine.

“Certainly, in my head, there are a lot of other books and articles I want to write,” Gardner said.

Gardner also has focused on spending more time with his four grandchildren, Dane and Luke, both 13, and Hope and Mark, both 10. Last summer, he and his wife took each of them on a one-day outing suited to the individual child’s interests.



Give thanks. Give life.



Kansas and Missouri Gifts of Life continued

“I am so thankful to see my grandchildren grow up these years, and the time with Barbara has been great,” he said.



Photo Roger Nomer / Joplin Globe
Lynn and Barbara Gardner talk about life after Lynn’s double-lung transplant during an interview at their Carl Junction home.

Anniversaries

Gardner now marks his life by anniversaries. He celebrated the 5-year anniversary of receiving his lungs last June, at which time he went to St. Louis for his 5-year checkup and took his wife to their favorite Italian restaurant. In February 2011, the Gardners will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary, an event that Gardner once doubted he would live to see.

But first on Gardner’s agenda is Tuesday’s Celebration of Life service, an event held by St. John’s Regional Medical Center, Freeman Health System, the Midwest Transplant Network and the Heartland Lions Eye Bank.

Cathy Lucchi, hospital services coordinator for Midwest Transplant Network, said the event has three purposes—to remember the lives of organ and tissue donors, to honor transplant recipients and to remember the approximately 106,000 people who are currently on a waiting list for an organ or tissue transplant.

Name Added Every 10 Minutes

A name is added to that list every 10 minutes, Lucchi said, and 18 people will die each day while waiting for a transplant.

There are 2,000 people in Missouri and 1,000 in Kansas awaiting a transplant, according to Midwest Transplant Network, an organ and tissue procurement organization serving Kansas and western Missouri.

Lucchi said the service will also include a ceremony during which a tree—likely a dogwood or a redbud—will be planted on St. John’s property in honor of organ and tissue donors. Donors’ families will receive dogwood or redbud seedlings in their memory, she said.

Nearly six years after his transplant, Gardner said he still has “a few things to deal with,” including taking more than 20 pills each day to fight off infection or rejection, and attending rehabilitation sessions at St. John’s Regional Medical Center three times per week.

“But I’m not going to worry about those things,” he said. “I’m going to go ahead and live. I feel like I’ve got a new lease on life.”



Give thanks. Give life.

Clergy Resource Guide

National Donor Sabbath



Kansas and Missouri Gifts of Life continued

Getting the Gift of Life *Smirl Thrives Thanks to New Liver*

By William Klusener

The Morning Sun

August 29, 2010

GIRARD, Ks—Nine-year-old Jacob Smirl of Girard loves sports and is “as ornery as they come,” according to his mother, Alice. But when he was little more than 2 years old, his future as a normal Kansas kid, and a two-sport bronze medalist at the National Kidney Foundation’s U.S. Transplant Games three weeks ago was very much in doubt.

When he was about 8-weeks-old, specialists diagnosed Jacob with biliary atresia, a condition in which the ducts that allow bile to flow from the liver are blocked. According to the Cincinnati Children’s Hospital website, biliary atresia is characterized primarily by jaundiced skin, and causes cirrhosis and eventually death if not treated.

When Jacob was 20-months-old, surgeons performed what is called the Kasai procedure, removing the damaged ducts and attaching the liver directly to his intestines. Theoretically the procedure would allow Jacob to grow for five to 10 years without needing any major surgery. But things didn’t go according to plan.

“We were hoping he would be a teenager when he needed a transplant,” Alice said. “But the damage was already done.”

When he was 20-months-old the tragic death of a young Colorado boy, seven-year-old Collin Sanders, in a car wreck gave Jacob the chance to live. He takes Prograf pills, which keep his body from rejecting Sanders’ liver, three times a day. But it’s a minor inconvenience considering the alternative,” Alice said.

“He’s a very active nine-year-old little boy,” she said as Jacob kicked a soccer ball around the backyard, carrying a football in his hands.

The plot recently thickened, in what turned out to be a good way, for the Smirls. Alice said she and Jacob (who seemed unusually shy, as Alice put it, during this interview) had spoken to another newspaper several years ago, a move that eventually led them to meet the Sanders family.

As it turns out, Collin’s grandfather lives just down the road in Carl Junction, Mo., and after reading the article about Jacob made the connection between the two. After several years and many correspondences, the Smirls got to meet Collin’s father, Kendal. Later, Alice said, the family traveled to Windsor, Colo., where they met the rest of the Sanders clan.



Give thanks. Give life.



Kansas and Missouri Gifts of Life continued

“It was like going to meet family we hadn’t seen in a long time,” Alice said. “We felt like we knew each other.”

That’s not to say it was easy.



Photo Sean Steffen / The Morning Sun

Jacob Smirl of Girard sits with the two bronze medals he won and pins he collected from athletes of other states at the U.S. Transplant Games, as well as a photo of him holding a picture of 7-year-old Collin Sanders, whose liver was transplanted into Smirl.

“She wrote, and it took several years for me to write back,” Collin’s mother, Tracy, said over the phone. “I didn’t know what to say.”

Tracy said the family didn’t think twice about donating Collin’s liver—they also donated his kidneys.

“It’s absolutely wonderful,” she said of knowing that Jacob is thriving now. “But donating his organs didn’t take the pain away.”

The Smirls have met many families of donors and recipients over the years. Some donor families, Alice said, have no desire to meet the recipients of their loved ones organs. But Tracy said the connection has been integral to her family’s recovery.

At the Transplant Games, where Jacob medaled in the bike race and softball throw, Kendal Sanders was able to heal his wounds a bit more, riding alongside Jacob and shouting words of encouragement. Tracy said he “doesn’t talk about it much,” but that she can tell it meant a lot to him.

“It’s something my husband doesn’t get to do with his son,” Tracy said. “But I think it really helps him.

“We don’t want him (Jacob) to replace Collin,” she continued. “But he was honoring Collin in his own way.”

Despite the tragic connection the families remain very close, Alice and Tracy said. And Jacob exchanges text messages with Collin’s brother and sister weekly.

“It’s great to see him grow up and be healthy,” Tracy said. “We’ve been showing his picture to everybody.”



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Alice, who now volunteers time with the Midwest Transplant Network to assist donors, recipients and their families, said she feels the same way. Seeing Jacob compete like a normal nine-year-old, she said, reaffirms her dedication to the Sanders' as well as her thankfulness for the life-saving decision they made so many years ago.

“I told them there’re not words enough to tell them how much we want to thank you,” Alice said.

“They’re a new part of our family we’re very grateful to have.”

Out of Grief Sprouts a Life-Saving Legacy

By Jane E. Brody
www.nytimes.com
August 16, 2010

You don’t have to be rich, famous or even an adult to leave a memorable legacy that can change lives.

Just ask Stacey Oglesby of Lockwood, Mo., whose 15-year-old daughter, Colbey, died in a car accident in 2001. Colbey had told her mother that when she got her driver’s license, she was going to sign up to be an organ donor. So when hospital personnel asked about organ donation, Ms. Oglesby said, “we had no hesitancy.”

Seven people got Colbey’s organs. Her lungs went to Valerie Vandervort, a 29-year-old Oklahoma woman with cystic fibrosis. In the nine years since, Ms. Vandervort has run three 5K races, hiked a mountain, danced at her sister’s wedding, doted on her nieces and nephews, and won medals in swimming at the 2010 National Kidney Foundation United States Transplant Games.

Ms. Oglesby also befriended the recipient of Colbey’s heart, Judy Kaufman of Chesterfield, Mo., who was near death with congestive heart failure. When they met, Ms. Oglesby took a stethoscope to listen to the beat of her daughter’s heart.



Ms. Oglesby, who speaks often about Colbey’s legacy, said she has inspired others to become potential organ donors. If not for donating her daughter’s organs and connecting to the recipients, she said, “it would have been hard to get through the grief.”



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Kansas and Missouri Gifts of Life continued

A Widespread Need

At any given time in the United States, more than 100,000 people are waiting for donor organs, more than 10 times as many as become available. Some die waiting; others get sicker and sicker, sometimes too ill to survive when a suitable organ finally becomes available.

In addition to kidneys, heart, lungs, liver, pancreas and intestines, donations can include tissues like corneas, skin, heart valves, bone, veins, cartilage, middle ear, tendons and ligaments that can be stored in tissue banks and used when needed.

Most donations come from people who die suddenly, usually from an accident, a gunshot or a brief illness that resulted in brain death. (A small but growing number of donations follow cardiac death.) Some adults indicate their wish to be donors by signing the back of their driver's license or a donor card or simply telling their next of kin. For minors, hospital personnel often ask the distraught parents if they would consider donating their child's organs.

But when 6-year-old Katie Coolican died in 1983 from an undiagnosed heart malformation, it was her mother, Maggie, a nurse, who asked about donating the child's organs — “to make some sense of it all,” Ms. Coolican, of East Hampton, Conn., said in an interview.

“We were willing to donate anything,” she added, “but at the time all they could use were Katie's corneas and kidneys.”

Likewise for Julie Schlueter of Winsted, Minn., whose daughter, Missy, 10, died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1992: donating the girl's organs meant her loss was not in vain.

Missy's liver and one kidney went to a man who four years later won a silver medal in the Summer Olympics in Atlanta; he sent the medal to the Schlueters to thank them for enabling him to live. Two toddlers, one from Italy and the other from Colorado, got Missy's heart valves. And an Iowa woman, then 47, got her other kidney and is still doing well 18 years later.

Rose D'Acquisto of St. Paul said that donating all her husband's usable organs “has led to things I'd never imagined.”

Her husband, Tony, died in 1996 at age 35 when an undiagnosed brain tumor hemorrhaged and left him in an irreversible coma. Ms. D'Acquisto said the recipient of his liver—an Indiana man near death with a rare liver disease—had now been married more than 30 years and has three grown children.

And the Minnesota farmer who got one of Tony's kidneys got his life back; he had spent three years traveling three hours a day three times a week for dialysis.



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Ms. D'Acquisto, now remarried, says she continues to write and speak about organ donation as love's greatest gift. Along with Ms. Schlueter, she was among more than 7,000 people who attended the Transplant Games last month in Madison, Wis.

When Katie Coolican died, there was no follow-up care for families who donate the organs of their loved ones. After a few years of struggling with grief, her mother wrote about her experience in *The American Journal of Nursing* and began speaking about organ donation all over the country.

She went back to school, got a master's degree and wrote a booklet, "For Those Who Give and Grieve," that was published by the National Kidney Foundation. (The foundation also publishes a quarterly newsletter with that title, edited by Ms. D'Acquisto.)

"Katie's had a wonderful legacy that continues to this day," Ms. Coolican said. In 1992 she founded the National Donor Family Council for the kidney foundation to help grieving families that donate loved ones' organs and tissues. The two-year follow-up program she created for families has become a model for organ donation programs throughout the country.

A version of this article appeared in print on August 17, 2010, on page D7 of the New York edition.





Kansas and Missouri Gifts of Life continued

Dear Recipient:

March 2007 we lost our son to a tragedy. When we received your letter we had so many emotions. Our son was a kind, caring and very giving young man. Everyone loved him. He has many friends and four brothers. A woman at his work called him “Smiley” because she said he was always smiling when she would come into his work. I know he is smiling now, knowing his gift has given so many others a new lease on life. Our family hopes your recovery continues. We have found comfort in knowing our son lives on through his recipients. We wish you well and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely, Donor Parents



“My life changed dramatically in December of 2001 on a rare, warm Sunday afternoon. I shattered my right knee playing soccer with my children behind a local elementary school. It was to have been a playful scrimmage with my 10-year-old daughter’s soccer team.

I had sustained a tibial plateau fracture to my right leg and knee. There was extensive damage to the bone, cartilage and ligaments. Surgery was performed the next day with a synthetic bone graft, which included plates and screws. Unfortunately, the graft failed almost immediately and left me with a large chunk of missing bone in the top part of my tibia. I was told in no uncertain terms that I would never walk normally again and would require crutches, a brace and/or cane to be able to walk at all. I had been a runner and athlete my entire life and now could only walk with great difficulty.

Numerous visits with other orthopedic surgeons offered little hope. I was able to be mobile only with the use of crutches and, on some good days, a brace and cane. Eventually, I found a doctor willing to perform a major reconstruction of my leg using a massive donor bone graft complete with ligaments and cartilage. Surgery took place in September of 2003. I was told that my donor had given other organs and tissues and mine was the last to be placed. The surgery was a success almost immediately. Over the next year, I learned how to walk again and built up muscles that had not been used in two years. Because of my wonderful gift, I walk normally today and am thankful for every step that I take.”

Monica Montgomery

Local tissue recipient & Midwest Transplant Network volunteer
2008 Donate Life Rose Parade Float participant



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Kansas and Missouri Gifts of Life continued

Dear Donor Family:

I wanted to write you to thank you so much for a bone graft that I received because your loved one cared so much and donated their tissue so other lives could be enhanced.

I needed the bone graft because I lost a tooth and need the donation in order to receive a dental implant. It may seem insignificant to some, but to me having that tooth will make it possible to eat and be able to chew on that side of my mouth. It doesn't seem like a big deal to lose a tooth until it actually happens!

Organ donation has a very special place in my heart because I lost my little brother last year to a heart attack when he was only 31 years old. My parents and I chose to donate his corneas so someone could see the world through his beautiful eyes. We were so happy and grateful when we received a letter telling us how much his donation changed the lives of the two people who received them. I wanted you to know that your loved one is also changing lives. I know how life shattering losing a family member is no matter how young or old they were, or under what circumstances they were taken from us. Please accept my sincere condolences and my thanks for the wonderful person your loved one was.

Sincerely, Donor Sister



Dear Donor Family:

I am so sorry for the loss of your loved one. It must have been so hard. I want to thank you for letting their organs be donated to give a new life for me. I hope somewhere in your heart there is a good feeling to know that you saved someone's life in return.

I am thirteen. I was diagnosed with an interstitial lung disease at nine months old, and I have been on oxygen since. I started to get tired more easily and I couldn't do what I wanted to do. When I turned twelve they started getting me ready for a double lung transplant. They called me in December for my transplant. Everything ran very smoothly.

Since the transplant I have gotten to do so many things I had never been able to do. I have learned to ride a bike, I have started to practice tennis, and now I love to walk my two dogs! I have been able to do so much. It feels so good to just go to the store without worrying about running out of oxygen or having to bother getting everything ready to go. I was able to go to my academic banquet. I got to go home for a weekend and see all my friends! We were so excited to see each other.



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Kansas and Missouri Gifts of Life continued

They let me go home about two weeks ago! Every three months I come back to make sure everything is running great. I miss a lot of people there, but I know I will see them again. Everyone has been so good to me throughout the transplant process. It feels so good to be home.

Thank you for giving me my life back,

Double Lung Recipient



Dear Recipient:

Your Thanksgiving card meant a LOT to us, and we especially were touched by the paper your son wrote about our loved one. It DOES help us to know that his organ donation saved other lives.

I have tried to put myself in your son's place, knowing that someone died to give me a chance at a better life. I guess what I would say face to face with your son...no one could have stopped our loved one's death, and by giving his organs in an inevitable death, your son's life was saved/changed. So I hope your son doesn't EVER feel guilty. **OUR LOVED ONE'S DEATH WOULD BE MUCH WORSE FOR US IF NOTHING GOOD HAD COME FROM IT!!!** When a young person is killed, some of the things you think and feel are "senseless" and "what a waste." So to know that someone else's life was made better **REALLY DOES** help ease the grief, and takes away a little of the "senseless" feeling. So you have given **US** a great gift by letting us know you!!

I can look at your son's picture and smile, and look at your son's smile and feel your joy that your beautiful son is healthy again! I guess I wanted to say all that because in your son's paper he says, "...but someone had to die for me to have this great gift." Please tell him we have **GREAT** joy that he is doing so well – it does help ease our grief and make our son's death a little more bearable.

Donor Mother

PS. Thank you so much for remembering my husband's death anniversary. Choosing to donate the gift of life is what he and we, the family, wanted to do. It was our opportunity to give of ourselves to others.

I have been able to cope with the grief due to my deep faith and support from my church, my family and my friends. Thank you for being there for me, many times, your great work in this project has helped me and many more people.



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Completing the Circle...Another Chance at Life

By Julie Miller, Donor Mom and Midwest Transplant Network Ambassador
Liberty, MO



Before I can truly tell you our story, I want to first introduce you to my son. Denton was 17, almost 6'4" with a size 15 shoe and an arm span of 74-75 inches—AND he was still growing!! He was ornery...especially toward me (his mom), and he always had a huge smile on his face.

Denton was a good kid and very active. As a senior, he was in National Honor Society, president of DECA (an entrepreneurship group), the reporter for FBLA (Future Business Leaders of

America), he was the study body president, a member of the show choir, in the musical, on the golf team, basketball team, and a junior facilitator for the Missouri Leadership Seminar. He had already been accepted to Northwest, where he had received an invitation to try out for their show choir. He was working on his time on a two-mile run, as he wanted to try out for their cross-country team. He had already received a scholarship and had decided on the degree that he wanted to pursue. At school he had earned the name Mr. C since he was not able to play football due to four knee surgeries; so, instead, he would paint his upper body red with a big white C on his chest and cheer at games.



Our story began on October 10, 2006, when we received a knock on our door at 12:30 a.m. with news that we had to hurry to the hospital before LifeFlight would take our son to a city hospital.

We rushed to the hospital with only enough time to see him and tell him that we loved him.

Then we called friends to take us to the city since we knew we should not even try to drive ourselves the 75 miles. When we arrived, we never even had to tell them our names as we were greeted by, "You're the parents from Carrollton." We then were sent to a private waiting room where it felt like we waited forever. We were not able to see our son until he was transferred from the ER to the pediatric ICU.

I don't remember the exact time, but it was early in the morning, and at that time, we were told that Denton was in a deep coma.



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Kansas and Missouri Gifts of Life continued

Sometime that morning, I turned to my husband and asked him to take a walk with me. At this point I knew that we had to make some hard decisions, and I wanted us to talk and be in agreement before anyone came to us to ask us to make these decisions. I told him that I knew that Denton was not going to come back to us and that we had to make some decisions. As we walked down the hall I asked my husband what he thought about organ donation. He and I also discussed other things—things that would need to be decided after Denton was no longer with us. It was after this that we asked someone on the staff about whom to talk to regarding organ donation—which, I know is not the norm, since many times it is the family who is approached with this question.

It is important for you to understand that prior to this incident I was adamantly opposed to organ donation. I was not against transplantation, but I was not able to accept the idea of not being whole at the end of my life, or anyone in my family not being whole.

This incident changed my thinking. But it was due to how our son lived his life that truly changed my thinking. I want to share with you what one of his friends wrote to him on his Facebook that shows who Denton was.

His positive attitude and love for those around him were so great. Denton was such a great young man, and I feel blessed to have known him—you always had the biggest smile on your face no matter what. When I was down and upset you sat there and helped me through it—you talked to me. Even though we weren't cousins, or brother and sister, I still feel like we were. You never had a care in the world. All that mattered to you was that your friends and family were happy.

I have often been asked if Denton had wanted to be a donor, and I tell people that it was not something that we had ever discussed with Denton. We had not discussed donation as no one ever wants to think about losing his/her child.

Throughout this day, there are so many things that happened—I can still see the events as clearly as if I were still there. At one point, we were beside Denton and there were quite a few nurses in the room—all at the foot of the bed—and my cell phone went off, and Denton's picture popped up. The significance of that is that only the picture of the person calling was supposed to show up. Everyone was just staring at us. My husband tried to take my phone, but I said it was okay because as I looked over at Denton a tear was coming out of the corner of his eye, and I just said that he was telling us that he was sorry, and that he was ok.

It was at 1:00 p.m. that Denton was pronounced brain dead. When the final tests were done, we were allowed to be in the room, and the doctor took the time to explain each test and what they were looking for to us. Showing us the true condition of our son was important to us as we did not feel left in the dark. In talking to other donor families whose loved ones were also declared



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brain dead, most were not given the chance to be walked through this process to gain the understanding that we did.

We were also encouraged to spend as much time with him as we wanted, and we were never made to feel like we were in the way. Time seemed to drag as we were waiting for his sister to arrive from Texas, but due to weather, her flight was delayed.

It was in the evening—I think around 6 or so—that we were in the room with him when his blood pressure started to drop. They were pumping fluids, and I clearly remember them looking at us and saying that we had to make a decision because if they did not take him right away then he would not be able to be a donor. It was at this time that I held his hand and said “Buddy, we just have one more thing we need you to do before we let you go,” and then his blood pressure stabilized, and we went up with him to the surgical area where we told him we would be waiting to see him after the surgery.

After his surgery his sister arrived and a very gracious doctor, who had waited for over three hours (even though he was not on duty), met with all of us to take the time to explain to his sister what Denton’s condition was and what had happened. This doctor’s availability meant a lot to us, as we wanted someone who would be able to explain brain death and be able to answer her questions—something we knew that we would not be able to do.

It was a full 24 hours from the knock on the door until we said our final goodbyes and left the hospital. That 24 hours was devastating and tragic.

We tried to find a way to turn this tragic event into something positive, and the fact that our son was able to be an organ donor did some positive things:

He was able to help others—he saved three lives.

This entire day is still stamped in my mind, and there were several things the staff did that were positives for us.

The staff members were exceptionally kind and gave us a wide berth. Never seeming to mind how many times we went in and out of the unit, since we had a hallway of family and friends there, we felt like we had to spend time with both our son and all of those who were there for us. Also the staff never made us feel like we were in the way, whether they were doing a test, checking levels, or working to keep him stabilized. The only negative was being called the wrong name, since Denton came in with a code name and his name was not on any documentation. A male nurse called us by the wrong name a couple of times, and I hope that I did not really yell at him too bad, but I could not understand why he kept calling me Mrs. Williams. I wasn’t trying to be hateful, but this oversight really bothered me. The nurse did apologize, and he did ask me for the correct last name. Another positive is that we never had to fill out any paperwork until we had to sign the consent for Denton to be an organ donor.



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Just knowing that he helped others and that a part of him is still alive is what I feel has helped us to deal with the loss of our son. I feel that being able to do things to honor him has also helped. We have continued to work with the Missouri Leadership Seminar in his honor, and I have become an ambassador for the Midwest Transplant Network. I feel that educating people about organ donation is important, and I share my story and the importance of organ donation with anyone who is willing to listen.



We first attended the transplant games in 2008. While at the games, we met many recipients—some who felt that they did not know what to say to the donor family since they thought “thank you” was not enough. We encouraged recipients to write to their donor families. We had received letters from two of our son’s recipients within a month of losing our son. They truly helped us—just knowing that the gifts were appreciated. The games also helped us as they were a form of completing the circle—creating bonds with recipients and other donor families—and also being able to see the full circle from the donation to the transplantation to another chance at life.

We truly feel strongly about organ donation, and we are just trying to do as our son would, and put others first.

That is why we went within two months of losing our son and made living wills to show that we wanted to follow and become donors ourselves.

Everyone deals with their grief in different ways. As my husband and I have talked about things, we both agree that our son being a donor is one of the things that helped us to be able to deal with our grief. We encourage others we meet to find something positive to do, as we feel such an investment is what allows you to go on with your life.

You never forget, and the tears are never far away, but those are what we refer to as our Denton moments. We try to think of the good times and go forward, and try to live as our son did—in putting others first.

To conclude, I want to share a verse that was important to Denton and a reflection of how he lived his life:

*Do what makes you happy
Be with who makes you smile
Laugh as much as you breathe
And love as long as you live.*



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Kansas and Missouri Gifts of Life continued

Compassion Rules the Decision for Many Who Give Up an Organ to Provide Someone Else With a Chance to Live

Angie Hutschreider

From Missouri's Capital City

www.newstribune.com

October 8, 2007

Living donation typically is initiated by the donor, although sometimes it is prompted by a needy recipient who is a family member or friend.

Jan Finn, chief operating officer of Midwest Transplant, said the process to become a living donor can be quite lengthy.

The process begins with meetings and lab work, where interested donors are tested for numerous conditions. Testing also ensures the donor is physically fit and includes psychological screenings.

“The kidneys, lungs, liver, a dental exam - and, for women, a gynecological exam - are performed, so the tests are quite inclusive and broad,” Finn said.

Diseases of organs and high blood pressure will exclude a person from donating.

The donor incurs costs that Finn said typically are health insurance co-pays and deductibles for testing performed before the transplant.

“The donor incurs all costs before the transplant, simply because the potential donor may go through most of the steps to donate and then be determined to be unfit,” she said.

The recipient's insurance or other means of pay is used to cover the cost for the donor's surgery in most cases.

When considering living donation, there are long-term affects for the donor to think through.

The donor may wonder what affects the donation itself will have on work, from time off needed to recover, obtaining health and life insurance, and even the possibility of risks associated with pregnancies following the donation.

Missouri law says living donors are entitled to a paid leave of absence after having donated. State employees are allowed 30 days paid leave after a donation, and are allowed five days paid leave for donating bone marrow.

The ability to get health and life insurance following a living donation typically is not restricted by most companies. Some people, however, have had problems changing insurance carriers after donation because of higher premiums, pre-existing conditions or waiting periods.

It is recommended that donors speak with a financial counselor and social worker at the transplant center to determine if the donation will affect their health or life insurance coverage.



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Kansas and Missouri Gifts of Life continued

Some women who are living donors question their ability to have a healthy pregnancy following their donation. Studies show kidney donation does not affect the completion of a safe pregnancy and childbirth.

It is recommended, however, that the prospective mother wait six months following her donation and talk with her obstetrician and family physician about the decision to have children following a donation.

Donors and recipients typically do not meet for at least a year following the procedure, if they meet at all. Both parties are allowed to write letters through Midwest Transplant.

Although Midwest also will help facilitate the exchange of donor and recipient information after both parties sign a waiver, Finn said the firm is required to wait a year to exchange the personal information.

“Frequently, people may wish to meet one another following the transplant,” Finn said. “But that is a very emotional and vulnerable time, so we find it best to have them wait until they have had a chance to think it through.”

If both parties agree to meet, Midwest will not serve as facilitator. Finn said the company's role in helping the donor and recipient meet ends with the organization giving the parties the information needed to contact one another.

Finn estimates fewer than 25 percent of people who request information about living donation make it through the process.

“Some are just calling to request information, some are excluded because of their health, some just did not realize what went into it,” she said, noting there are roughly six living donations arranged through Midwest annually.

“The number of people that are, at the very least, interested in being a living donor tends to increase as media coverage increases, then it drops off again.”

Any type of organ donation, Finn said, takes great compassion and thought. However, she feels people willing to give the gift of life while offering a vital part of their health are extraordinary people.

“It takes a special person to be a living donor,” she said. “I think it is usually a person who has already been touched by donation. This is more than just a giving person, it is very noble of them to consider a person's life beyond their own.”

“Living donation - any organ donation - is one of the greatest gifts a person can give. It is giving someone the gift of life and giving their families - their wife, son, grandfather or other loved ones - a second chance at life.”



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