



february 14th: a true love day

While we often associate February 14th as the day for flowers, chocolates and images of Cupid, this day is also something much more significant and life-changing: National Donor Day.

According to the U.S. Government Information on Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation, National Donor Day was started in 1998 by the Saturn Corporation and its United Auto Workers partners with the support of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and many nonprofit health organizations. It has four goals: encourage people to register to become an organ and tissue donor and discuss their wishes with their families; join the National Registry of potential marrow and blood stem cell donors; learn how a baby's umbilical cord blood stem cells can be donated; and to donate blood.

Carolina Donor Services (CDS) will be celebrating this day of life and donation with a month-long "Share the Love" campaign on the organization's Facebook page. Weekly prizes will be awarded to those who visit the page and spread the message of donation.

How can supporters of organ and tissue donation participate in National Donor Day? When it comes to registering to be an organ and tissue donor in North Carolina, there are two main methods. When applying for or renewing your license at the Department of Motor Vehicles, you have the option to register as an organ and eye donor. This will be indicated by a heart on your license. You also can register on the Donate Life North Carolina Online Donor Registry at www.donatelifenc.org.

On the online registry you can specify which organs and tissues you agree to donate. However, the most important part of becoming a donor is discussing your end-of-life wishes with your family and/or those who may end up having to make decisions for you.

Why be a donor? Over 110,000 individuals across the United States are currently on the waiting list for an organ. Here in North Carolina, over 3000 residents await their opportunity to live full, healthy lives by receiving a transplant. Tissue and cornea donation improve the lives of people every day by restoring sight and mobility.

Video featuring donor family, recipient initial meeting

Mandy Reid's husband, Gerry Reid Jr., lost his life in a fatal traffic accident on March 4, 2010 in Raleigh. Across town in Chapel Hill the next day, Mary Scercy received the call she had been waiting for: a pair of healthy lungs from a donor. Gerry had made the decision to be an organ donor, and his family honored his wishes, resulting in saving the lives of four people through organ donation, giving sight to two individuals and improving the lives of many more through tissue donation.

On November 5, Mary and members of her family as well as Gerry's family met Mary and her husband Ted at the SECU Family House in Chapel Hill where Mary stayed after the transplant. The two families shared their personal stories of the donation and transplantation process as SECU's Family House Diaries filmed and created a beautiful video showcasing, in particular, Mary's plight. Both families were incredibly moved by the experience and celebrated Gerry's continual presence through Mary's newfound lease on life.

This particular story from Family House Diaries is available to view at: <http://news.unhealthcare.org/news/2010/November/family-house-diaris-a-thanksgiving-to-remember>.

Endless Gift: A Tribute to a Father

BY SHONDA PROFFIT, DONOR DAUGHTER

Father, son, brother, friend. These are just a few words that come to my mind when I think of my dad, Johnnie Purvis. But the one word that sticks out the most, especially during this holiday season, is gift. When we think of the word gift, we think of material items: ribbons, fancy paper and bows. We are all wrapped up in the hustle and bustle of shopping for the perfect gift. When in reality the most perfect gift has already been given to us: the gift of life. What we do with it is entirely up to us.

My dad was not a rich man of material things. He worked hard to provide for his family and to give us the things we needed. For most of my life he worked two jobs. He gave all he had to make sure we were taken care of. My dad was a giver, not a taker. If there was something my brother, sister or I wanted, he sacrificed his own wants and time to make sure we had it. Thinking back I remember that whenever there was a family member, friend or someone in the community that was in need, my dad tried his best to help in any way he could. Sometimes he didn't have the money to give, but he gave what he had, whether it be a home cooked meal to a homebound friend, an old chair to a family in need or his Saturday morning for a benefit golf tournament. He always gave something.

My dad was an old-fashioned, rough-around-the-edges kind of man. My mother and he raised my siblings and I to treat others as we would want them to treat us. We were taught to have great compassion for the people around us. When needed, he also provided us with discipline and stern words. I did not always understand why our father was sometimes hard and stern with us. It was not until I was older that I began to understand our dad was giving us the tools we needed to make it on our own in this world. As I stated before, our dad was not rich with material things, but when it came down to it, he gave my brother, sister and I the gifts we really needed to get through this life. Our dad gave us the gifts of love, strength, courage, and compassion, which ultimately helped us to become the people we are today.

On May 22, 2008, I carried my dad to High Point hospital for a catheterization. This was something we had done several times before. My brother and sister both had to work that day, so it was just the two of us. My dad had already had eight stints from over the past few years, so we knew the routine pretty well. I remember thinking on the ride to the hospital and during our time in the

waiting room that something felt different this time than ever before. My dad was not very talkative; he seemed more nervous than usual, but when I asked him if he was scared or worried, he said no. He told me that he was just thinking and ready to get the procedure over with. He had no idea my sister had already told me that he had previously told her that he was at peace with whatever happened that day. That statement was a little odd to us because we did not remember him making a comment like that before when going to the hospital.

As I sat alone in the large, quiet waiting room, I silently prayed for my dad as I was working on a blanket I was knitting. I was startled by my dad's doctor and nurse who suddenly burst into the waiting room. They told me things had not gone as planned and that my father had suffered a stroke during the procedure. By this time my husband had arrived. We frantically made phone calls to family members and scurried around to make our way to Wake Forest NC Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem where my dad was being transferred to.



Upon arriving in Winston-Salem, my father was coherent and in good spirits. He was talking to family members and laughing as usual. This behavior was somewhat misleading because as a result of the stroke, there was massive swelling around his brain and the results were grim. Our father fell into a coma and left us on May 25, 2008.

My family and I feel so blessed to have had those last three days with our dad. He never ceased to amaze us because even during his darkest hours, he gave us the gift of hope and perseverance.

Through his love for others and his love of giving, he gave us the tools to make the decision for him to be an organ donor. Even though our dad's life on earth had come to pass, he was able to help give a second chance of life to three others by donation both kidneys and his liver to people in need.

As you ponder on the thoughts of the perfect gift during the holidays, know that it has already been given to each of us. This is not an ordinary gift; instead, it is quite extraordinary. It is a gift that we can continue to give when we no longer need it ourselves. When we become an organ or tissue donor, we too may be given the ability to give the ultimate, most perfect gift: the gift of life.



Why become a Friends for Life volunteer?

- Make a difference in the lives of thousands each year
- Spread the word about organ, eye and tissue donation
- Work with recipients, donor families and those awaiting a transplant

If you are interested, please email volunteer@carolinadonorservices.org with your name, full mailing address, county of residence, email and phone number. You can also call (800) 200-2672.

Life Anew Spotlight:

Communications between donor families, recipients

BY KATIE PAULSON, LIFE ANEW COORDINATOR

One of the most popular questions we are asked in aftercare is how a donor family can communicate with the recipient of their loved one's organs and/or tissues. There are no hard and fast rules for communicating with recipients. We do have guidelines and suggestions if you and your family members are interested in taking that step.

First and foremost: communication is optional; you always have a choice whether you would like to initiate correspondence or receive correspondence if a recipient elects to write your family. Do all recipients write? We wish that we could say yes. However, we are not quite there yet. We work closely with our local transplant centers, other organ procurement organizations and our partner tissue banks to increase awareness, education and opportunities for recipients and their families to share their appreciation for the gift of life. We will do what we can do to support you in this process.

Families of organ donors

Because of the nature of organ donation and allocation, you have the option of writing to the recipient of your loved one's organ(s) first. You may write one letter for all the recipients, and we will make the appropriate number of copies to distribute to the recipient's transplant centers. Some families have elected to write more personalized letters to a particular organ recipient as well. We ask that you please talk to us prior to sending in a letter so that we can follow-up with the recipient's transplant center to evaluate their post-transplant recovery.

Families of tissue donors

Tissue donation is a lengthier process in regards to determining both tissue donation outcomes and the respective recipients compared to organ donation. Donated tissue can be distributed for up to five years after it was recovered from a donor. Therefore, it is not uncommon to be notified of communication from a recipient of your loved one's donation one to five years after the donation actually occurred. Unfortunately, we are unable to forward letters to recipients until a recipient has written to you.

We know more information about your loved one's tissue donation outcome approximately one year after the donation has occurred; it can be as soon as eight months afterwards. We will certainly work with each family on a case-by-case basis. Please contact us at (800) 200-2672 for assistance.

General guidelines for communication

If you wish to write to the recipient and have confirmed with the Life Anew Coordinator that the communication would be able to be forwarded to the appropriate recipient(s), we ask that the following information **not** be included in your letter:

- *No last names
- *No addresses, cities, states, zip codes
- *No telephone numbers
- *No email addresses

Please include the following information on a separate sheet of paper with your correspondence:

- *Donor's first and last name
- *Your name
- *Your contact information
- *Any specific instructions

We will follow-up with you to confirm that we have received your correspondence and whether we have been able to forward your letter. The process of indirect communication can take several weeks, so we do ask your patience. We place high priority on ensuring correspondence is turned around quickly through our organization as we know how important those letters are to both donor and recipient families.

Why do donor families write?

Donor families write for different reasons. Some find it therapeutic to write about their loved ones. Families share about their loved ones' hobbies, interests, and family lives. Other families desire to establish a relationship with the recipient(s) to the point of meeting them one day. Some may write in response to a recipient's letter. There are no timelines or expiration dates placed on correspondence. Donor families can write anytime, even years after the donation process. We do maintain a copy of all letters on file. If you have any other questions, please let us know anytime.

Dealing with Grief

Website Feature



The National Kidney Foundation (NFK) offers a website specifically for donor families. It features information on the National Donor Family Council as well as support resources for grief and bereavement. The website also has instructions on how to participate in the NFK's donor family quilt, write memorials for loved ones and upcoming events for donor families. See what is available for you at www.donorfamily.org.

Finding Grief Support Online

Coping with grief can look differently to different people. Where some individuals find solace in attending support groups at local churches, hospice centers or other private facilities, other people have found just as much comfort in more electronic participation.

Online grief support chat rooms, blogs, and listservs have become much more popular and available in the last five to ten years. People can connect with others who are experiencing similar feelings of loss and seeking the same direction and guidance for what they should do next.

Daily Strength (www.dailystrength.org) offers message boards based on discussions prompted by other members. There is also advice available on different bereavement treatments, such as talking, remembering, prayer and finding support from family and friends.

Other online grief sites with chat rooms and forums include: Online Grief Support: A Social Community (www.online-griefsupport.com), GROWW (www.groww.org), and Web Healing (www.webhealing.com). Blogs focusing on grief and support include Open to Hope (www.opentohope.com), Heartache to Healing (heartachetohealing.com/blog) and the Center for Grief Recovery (www.griefcounselor.org)

Similar with other forms of social media, we caution you on what information that you share and make public. While there is certainly a level of anonymity in online grief support, it is still easy to piece together identities from minimal information.

Journey Through Grief:

The Mourner's Six Reconciliation Needs

BY ALAN D. WOLFELT, PH.D

Renowned bereavement counselor Alan Wolfelt provides much insight into the grief process. He has pinpointed six "yield signs" that individuals experiencing grief will most likely encounter. He calls them the "reconciliation needs of mourning." He acknowledges that while each person's grief is unique and personal, all mourners must follow these six guidelines in order to begin healing.

Need 1: Acknowledging the reality of the death.

In order to initiate the healing process, you must confront the truth that your loved one will no longer be a physical presence in your life. You may replay events surrounding the death over and over. This first step can take weeks or even months. Be patient with yourself as you work through each of them.

Need 2: Embracing the pain of the loss.

It's much easier for us to avoid, repress or deny the pain of grief than it is to confront it. But, we must face our pain in order to reconcile ourselves to it. Friends and family members may encourage you to move on or "get over" your hurt and pain. The reality is that by facing your pain, you will actually be working through your grief rather than simply repressing it.

Need 3: Remember the person who died.

It is important to remember and reflect on the memories you shared with your loved one as well as the physical objects that link you together (i.e. photos). Just because your loved one is no longer their physically does not mean your relationship disappears; it simply changes into a different type of relationship.

Need 4: Developing a new self-identify.

Part of your self-identity comes from the relationships you have with other people. Death often requires you to take on new roles that have been filled by the person who died. You may struggle with feelings of helplessness, frustration and fear.

Need 5: Searching for meaning.

When a loved one dies, you may question the meaning and purpose of life and confront your religious and spiritual beliefs. You may feel that when this person died, part of you died with him or her. This is normal and part of your journey toward renewed living.

Need 6: Receiving ongoing support from others.

The quality and quantity of understanding support you receive during your grief journey will have a major influence on your capacity to heal. You should not attempt to do this on your own. Seek out individuals who will help and encourage you to mourn after your loved one's death. Mourning is not the enemy but a necessity to be experienced.

Share your thoughts...

If you would like to share your loved ones' story or have other suggestions for this newsletter, please contact the Life Anew Program Coordinator at Carolina Donor Services. Call (800) 200-2672 or email us at lifanew@carolinadonorservices.org.

