

# Did You Know?

## Facts and figures about organ and tissue donation

- Currently, more than 110,000 Americans are registered on the national transplant waiting list for donated organs, including approximately 700 Kentuckians.
- A new name is added to the waiting list every 14 minutes.
- Approximately 15 to 18 people die each day while waiting for a life saving transplant.
- Transplantable organs include the kidneys, heart, liver, lungs, pancreas and small bowel.
- Transplantable tissue includes bone, cartilage, skin, corneas, heart valves, saphenous veins, tendons and ligaments.
- One individual donor can provide organs, bone and tissue for more than 50 people in need.
- Regardless of age or medical history, EVERY Kentucky resident (with a driver's license or state ID) can join the Kentucky Organ Donor Registry.
- More than 500,000 Americans are treated with transplantable bone, tendon and ligament tissue each year.
- In 2010, 379 successful organ transplants were performed in Kentucky. It is estimated that twice as many could have been performed if more people said "YES" to donation.
- By law, donation is the right of every American age 18 and older. Hospitals are obligated, by law, to identify potential donors and to inform families of their right to donate.
- Individuals may indicate their wish to be a donor by placing their name on the Kentucky Organ Donor Registry when renewing their drivers' license or state identification card at the local Circuit Court Clerk's office or by visiting [www.DonateLifeKY.org](http://www.DonateLifeKY.org).
- Acceptable donors range from newborns to senior citizens.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **DO I STILL NEED TO SIGN THE BACK OF MY DRIVER'S LICENSE AND PLACE A "DONOR DOT" STICKER ON THE FRONT?**

No. All that is necessary in designating your wishes to become an organ donor is to place your name on the Kentucky Organ Donor Registry when renewing your driver's license or state identification card at your local Circuit Court Clerk's office or by visiting [www.DonateLifeKY.org](http://www.DonateLifeKY.org). Signing the back of your license and using the "donor dot" sticker is no longer necessary, but you are welcome to continuing doing so if you choose. Always be sure to share your decision with your family.

## **WHY DO INDIVIDUALS CHOOSE TO BECOME DONORS?**

More people are being educated about organ and tissue donation and are able to make an informed decision. Also, many people now realize that it may be their family member, neighbor or they themselves who may one day need a life-saving organ transplant.

## **WHAT CAN I DO TO INCREASE AWARENESS ABOUT ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION?**

There are several things that an individual can do to increase awareness. You could become a volunteer with the Kentucky Circuit Court Clerks' **TRUST FOR LIFE**. You could discuss organ donation with your family. You could donate \$1.00 to the statewide Kentucky Circuit Court Clerks' **TRUST FOR LIFE** program when you renew your driver's license. The funds are spent to increase awareness about organ and tissue donation.

## **HOW ARE ORGAN RECIPIENTS SELECTED?**

Organ recipients are selected based on established medical criteria and urgency of need. Financial or social status never determines who receives a donated organ. If there is a donor in this area, priority is given to potential recipients in this locale. If none match, the search is expanded regionally. If there is still not a "good" match, the computer will look at potential recipients nationally.

## **WHEN MUST ORGANS AND TISSUE BE REMOVED?**

Donated organs will be removed as soon as possible after determination of brain death. Donated tissue must be removed within 24 hours of death.

## **WILL THE RECIPIENT OF MY ORGANS AND TISSUES FIND OUT WHO I AM?**

Only if you want them to know. Otherwise, you will remain completely anonymous.

## **CAN I CHOOSE WHICH ORGANS AND/OR TISSUE I WANT TO DONATE?**

At this time, the Kentucky Organ Donor Registry does not have an option for specifying which organs & tissues you would like to donate. It is suggested that you state this in your living will and discuss it with your family.

# Myths & Fears about Organ Donation

## **SIGNING A DONOR CARD OR REGISTERING ON KENTUCKY'S ORGAN DONOR REGISTRY WILL AFFECT THE LEVEL OF MEDICAL CARE I RECEIVE IN THE HOSPITAL.**

Absolutely not true! The level of medical care is always based on the determination of what is best for you to preserve your life and improve your health. The transplant team will not be involved at all until all possible efforts to save your life have failed. The criteria used to determine brain death are very strict. Doctors involved in treating a patient cannot be involved in donation or transplantation.

## **MY FAMILY WILL HAVE TO PAY FOR THE REMOVAL OF MY ORGANS OR TISSUE.**

The donor's family and the donor hospital are **not** responsible for any procurement expenses. The cost will be absorbed by the transplant center, the recipient, or in some cases, by the federal government.

## **MY RELIGION OBJECTS TO ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION.**

Moral leaders all over the world favor donation as an expression of the highest humanitarian ideals. The gift of an organ donor, essential to the life of another human being, is consistent with most major religions. If you have any questions in this regard, you should consult with your religious leader.

## **I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO HAVE AN OPEN CASKET FUNERAL BECAUSE OF DISFIGUREMENT IF I DONATE ORGANS OR TISSUE.**

There is no change in the way the body looks after organ and tissue donation. The removal of organs and tissue is a sterile, surgical procedure conducted in the operating room under the direction of qualified surgeons. The physical condition of the body remains completely intact for burial arrangements.

## **ONCE I SIGN A DONOR CARD OR REGISTER ON KENTUCKY'S ORGAN DONOR REGISTRY I CANNOT CHANGE MY MIND.**

If you change your mind, follow the instructions on the Donate Life Kentucky website, [www.donatelifeky.org](http://www.donatelifeky.org) OR simply contact the **TRUST FOR LIFE** (toll free 1-866-945-5433) to remove your name from the registry.

# How Donor Tissues Can Benefit Others

## **Whole Eye/Corneas**

If corneas are donated, two people can benefit from the gift of sight. The cornea is a clear lens sitting on the front of the eye and when removed, it looks like a soft contact lens. If the whole eye is donated, again, the corneas may give two people sight. The sclera, or white part of the eye, can be used for several different procedures. An eye prosthesis can be made from the sclera shell or it can be used to patch an eye with a penetrating injury. Also, the sclera can be used in a Moltene procedure, an ophthalmic procedure used to treat glaucoma; therefore, preventing blindness. As many as ten people can benefit from whole eye donation.

## **Heart Valves**

The heart is removed and sent to the tissue bank for removal of the aortic and pulmonic valves. These valves are used for heart valve replacements. A person receiving a human donated valve does not need anti-coagulant (blood thinner) therapy, as do those receiving a mechanical valve. Anti-coagulant therapy poses a 1.5% fatality risk per year when used. Therefore, it is beneficial for children and young adults to receive human valves. For example, if a 5 year-old has a mechanical valve replacement and lives to the age of 70 he has a 65 year x 1.5% chance for a fatalistic bleeding injury to occur. This is a 97.5% probability. Whereas, with a human valve, this poses no risk. Two people may benefit from a heart valve donation.

## **Skin**

The skin removed is superficial, about the thickness of a Kleenex, leaving an appearance as a sunburn when removed. The skin is removed from the abdomen, middle to lower back, buttocks and the front and back of the thigh. Donated skin is used with burn victims and can be placed on a wound and left up to six weeks. During this time, the patient has the opportunity to grow his own skin without the trauma of losing new skin to dressing changes. New and exposed nerve endings are covered during this time, decreasing the patient's pain. One skin donor can help as many as eight people.

## **Bone**

The bone recovered is from the iliac crest to the ankles including cartilage, tendons and ligaments. The bone is used in orthopedic, neurosurgical and plastic surgeries. Some of these surgeries are spinal fusions and reconstructive surgeries. For people who have bone tumors, or a traumatic bone crushing injury, the bone can simply be removed and replaced with cadaveric bone, preventing an amputation of the limb. Hips can be replaced and knees repaired with bone donation. In males, the humerus can be removed and is large enough to do a female hip replacement. One bone donor can help as many as one hundred people.

## **Saphenous Veins**

The saphenous vein is a large vein in the leg. Saphenous veins are often used by people who are having coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG). For those same patients returning seven to ten years later having no saphenous vein, donated vein can be used. For people who have severe vascular diseases and need vascular surgeries, (aortic-femoral bypass), again saphenous vein can be used. A vein donor can help two to three people.

## **Funeral Arrangements**

With all donation, the individual can still have an open casket funeral. Eyes are replaced with eye-caps and closed, without leaving any changes in the patient's appearance. A mid-line incision is used to remove the heart, which is sutured as any other surgical procedure. Families are informed of this and are told a high collar is advised to cover the incision. With skin donors, the skin is removed from areas covered with clothing. With bone and vein donation, when the bones and vein are removed, they are replaced with artificial bone and reconstructed. The arms and legs have suture lines that can be covered with clothing.

# How YOU Can Become a Donor

More than 700 Kentuckians are currently on waiting lists for life-saving organ transplants. Some of these patients will die waiting. Hundreds more are waiting life-enhancing cornea and tissue transplants.

While the number of donation and success rates have increased in recent years, so has medical science's ability to save more lives with organ transplantation—and the need for donated organs and tissue. A single organ and tissue donor can help more than 50 people in need.

If you wish to become a potential organ or tissue donor, the **TRUST FOR LIFE** suggests taking the following steps:

- Place your name on Kentucky's Organ Donor Registry by visiting [www.DonateLifeKY.org](http://www.DonateLifeKY.org). If you have not registered by the time you renew your Kentucky driver's license, you will be asked to do so at that time.
- Sign the back of your Kentucky driver's license or identification card and have two witnesses sign it as well.
- Place a "donor dot" sticker in the upper right corner of your license or I.D. card. Stickers are available at the driver's license counter or by contacting the **TRUST FOR LIFE** at (866) 945-5433 or by visiting our website at [www.trustforlife.org](http://www.trustforlife.org).
- Tell your family of your decision.

# Two Tragedies—Thirteen Miracles

## A True Story of How One Family's Gifts of Life Restored the Lives of Many Others\*

*Organ donor families each have their own stories. Each story is different and special. But what is common to all is the uncommon generosity of the human spirit, often in a time of grief and tragedy, to rise above personal self-concern to help others in need of transplantation, in need of life.*

Those are the words of Kenneth Moritsugu, M.D., Assistant Surgeon General and Medical Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, who lost both his wife and daughter in separate automobile accidents within a five-year period.

In 1992, Donna Lee Moritsugu was in a severe automobile accident that left her brain dead. Long before that day, she and her husband had decided to be organ and tissue donors, so Dr. Moritsugu carried out his wife's wish to give the gift of life.

Because of Donna's decision to offer her organs to those in desperate need:

- **A marine biologist in Tampa, Florida, the father of two children, received a new heart, and a new life.**
- **A young hospital custodian in Washington, D.C., who is diabetic, received an urgently needed replacement pancreas and kidney.**
- **A 12-year-old, who was on dialysis, received Donna's second kidney.**
- **A retired school teacher in Pennsylvania received a new liver and was able to spend Christmas with her three children.**
- **A young woman in Baltimore, Maryland, received one cornea; the other cornea provided new vision to a 49-year-old government worker.**

These "miracles of life" are first and foremost the result of one courageous and generous woman's decision, and her family's "privilege of carrying them out." After Donna's family agreed to the donation, the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, a national computerized system to ensure the fair distribution of organs in the U.S., found appropriate matches for Donna's organs among patients on the waiting list. Then many others helped by successfully removing, transporting and transplanting Donna's organs.

# Two Tragedies—Thirteen Miracles (Cont.)

But that is not the end of the story of this family, which again turned another tragedy into hope for others.

In 1996, Dr. Moritsugu's 22-year-old daughter, Vikki Lianne, was struck by an automobile while crossing a street. She suffered a massive brain injury and died three days later. Vikki had told her older sister that, like her stepmother, she wanted to be an organ and tissue donor. In her reported words, "It was the least (she) could do for her fellow humanity."

And so, because of Vikki's decision to be an organ and tissue donor:

- **A mother of five children from upstate New York received a healthy heart, and a new lease on life for herself and her family.**
- **A widow with four children received Vikki's lung.**
- **A 59-year-old retired man from Washington, D.C., who was an active volunteer with a charitable organization, received her liver.**
- **A 26-year-old man in Florida received one cornea, and a 60-year-old woman in Pennsylvania received the other cornea.**

**Thirteen living miracles from two deceased people!** - not counting the wives, husbands, daughters, sons and others who also benefited from lives restored through organ transplantation.

This, indeed, is an exceptional case. But *every* person who chooses to be a donor is making an exceptional contribution. **Many more donors are urgently needed.** As of November 30, 2006 there were 94,663 patients waiting for organ transplants; the list grows by about 500 monthly. While each day about 65 people receive life enhancing organ transplants, approximately 17 people on the organ waiting list die. Most of the deaths could be avoided if there were a sufficient supply of donors.

(\* The above story was told by Dr. Moritsugu at the April 1997 National Donor Recognition Ceremony in Washington, D.C., and is printed here with his permission.)

*For a free brochure on organ and tissue donation, call the Coalition on Donation at (888) 90-SHARE (888-907-4273), or for more information, visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's website at [www.organdonor.gov](http://www.organdonor.gov).*

# If Not For You

## *If Not For You*

*A Tribute to My Donor*

*If not for you  
There would be no me  
That gift of life  
You gave me.*

*There were tears of joy.  
There were tears of sorrow.  
You gave me hope,  
For a brighter tomorrow.*

*I wiped away the tears  
Tried not to cry  
Knew some would live  
And others would die.*

*The only way  
I could understand  
Was to realize this  
Was part of God's plan.*

*If not for you  
What would I do?  
God chose someone special  
He sent you.*

*Now a part of you  
In me has thrived  
Thanks to you, donor,  
I have survived.*

*And with each new day  
This thought comes through  
I would not be alive,  
If not for you.*

*Nancy Sinisi Talty*

*Reprinted from the "For Those Who Give and Grieve" newsletter  
published by the National Donor Family Council of the National Kidney  
Foundation.*

# To Remember Me

## *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 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.

- by Robert N. Test