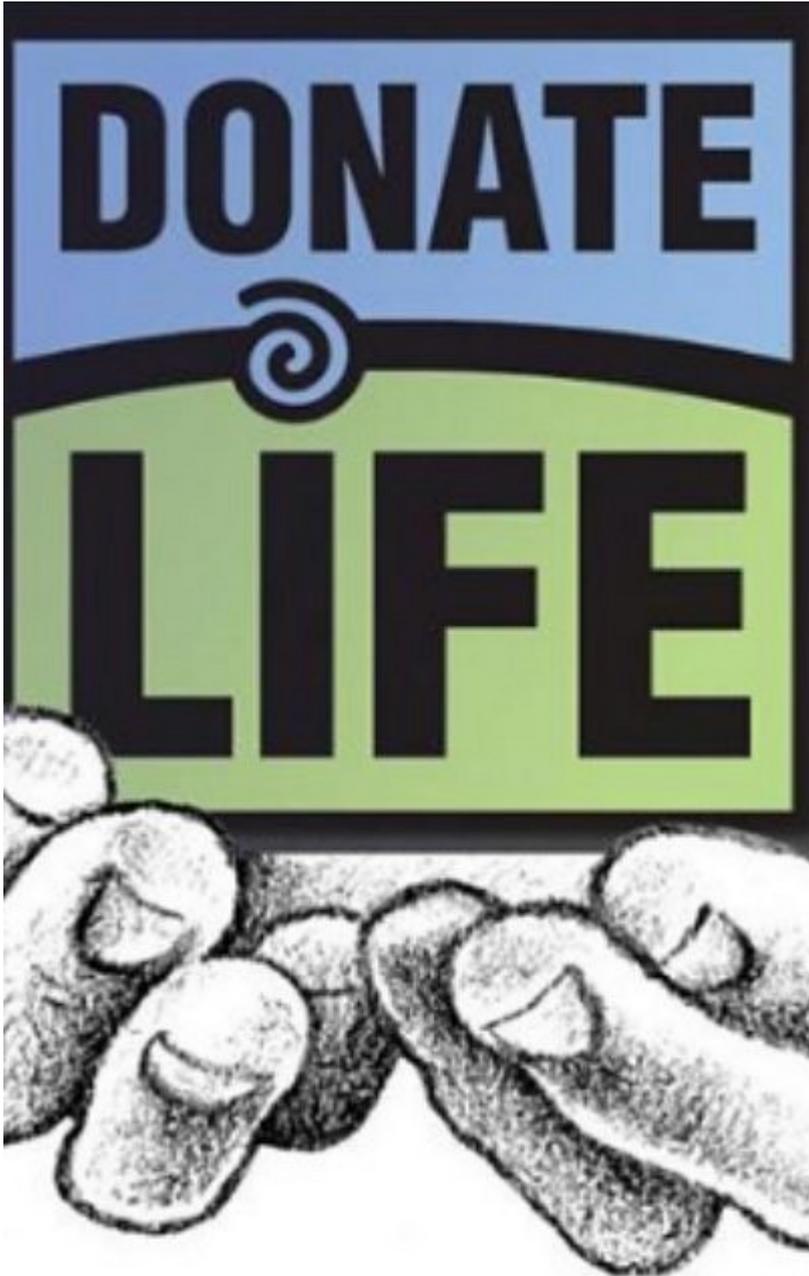


Letter to the Editor - The Greatest Gift of All, donate life

Posted by [TBN Editor](#) On 03/10/2016



To the Editor:

This is written in response to a Letter to the Editor posted by the BayNet on March 3, 2016 regarding organ and tissue donation.

My condolences to the mother who lost her son and to his family that lost their loved one. My gratitude goes to her son for the kindness and generosity he gave by being an organ and tissue donor. I have experienced both tremendous pain as a donor mother and amazing gratitude as the wife of a recipient. My family and I made the decision many years ago to donate the tissue of our new born child that passed away shortly after being born. It was important and meaningful for us that her life, while short, has a purpose, and that hopefully we could save another family from the grief we were experiencing.

I agree with the letter's author on one thing: the citizens of Southern Maryland deserve to be aware of the impact and the facts about organ and tissue donation. I hope my letter enlightens you to the TRUTH about organ and tissue donation.

My husband's life was saved by a 23-year old man in March of 2015. His parents had not known that he was designated as a donor, but they are SO PROUD of him for making that kind and generous decision. In his final act here on earth, he gave the greatest gift of all – LIFE. He gave my husband and my family a second that we may not have had. Because of him, my husband saw our daughter graduate from high school and go on to attend college. Because of him, my husband got to take another fishing trip with our son. Because of him, my husband was not one of the 22 people who die every day because of the lack of organs for transplant. THAT is the impact of donation.

The experience of the Letter to the Editor's author completely contradicts all that my family and our donor's family have experienced with the donation process. The Donate Life Coordinators that have supported both my family and our "special angel's" family were a tremendous support during the whole experience, and continue to support both families to this day. Donors and recipients are part of a very small and special group. Our Coordinators reach out to us on many occasions to see if we need any support. When a Coordinator receives that call in the middle of the night to attend to a family at a hospital, they are there to

provide comfort and support to the donor and the family throughout the donation process. My husband's donor and his family were treated with kindness and respect. After the transplant, our Coordinator's worked with both families to facilitate our meeting. They were kind, compassionate, and helped us through a very difficult time. As a Donate Life ambassador, I have met many, many other donor families, and their experiences have been the same: supportive, compassionate, and respectful.

Again, I agree that people have a right to the facts in order to make an informed decision about donation. But you deserve to know the TRUE facts, not the completely false myths published in last weeks' letter.

ACTUAL FACTS about ORGAN & TISSUE DONATION:

- One person can save up to eight lives through organ donation and enhance more than fifty lives through tissue donation. That means one person has the potential to impact over fifty eight lives through donation.
- The heart, both kidneys, liver, both lungs, pancreas, and intestine are all organs that can be donated to save another's life.
- Tissue donation includes bones, corneas, heart valves, skin, tendons, and veins. These tissues contribute to restoring vision, healing burn victims, and helping individuals with neurological and orthopedic conditions.
- Donors and recipients are matched by blood type, height, weight/body type, waiting time, medical urgency, and geography. Factors such as gender, ethnicity, income, insurance or celebrity status are NEVER taken into consideration in this process. In fact, Former Vice President Dick Cheney waited 20 months for his heart transplant. My husband, a citizen of St. Mary's County, waited 7½ months. They both received their transplant at the same hospital.
- It is ILLEGAL to sell organs or tissue in the United States. (The National Organ Transplant Act of 1984). They are not stored in a warehouse, nor are they sold on AMAZON.
- Donors are treated with the utmost respect and gratitude.

And perhaps the most important fact to address a completely disrespectful and hurtful statement in last week's letter: Organ and tissue donation is ONLY considered after all life-saving measures have been exhausted. A patient must be pronounced dead by a qualified physician. Organ donation can only occur after circulatory death or brain death, which is declared by a physician after a series of tests over multiple hours. Circulatory death is the irreversible loss of function of the heart and lungs. Brain death is the irreversible loss of function of the brain and brain stem. Brain death IS death. This is not the same as a coma. There are NO proven cases of anyone ever recovering from brain death, despite what you may read in the media. In order for a deceased person to become a donor, a patient must remain on a ventilator until the organs have been recovered by a surgeon in order to keep the organs viable. Organs have a short period of time in which they can be transplanted; for most organs, it's a matter of hours. These processes are timely and life-saving.

April is National Donate Life Month and I encourage everyone in Southern Maryland to become more informed about what it means to be an organ and tissue donor. I'd be glad to share more of our family's story with anyone interested or who may be going through this process. It helps to talk to someone that has lived it.

And to all the donor families out there, please remember this sentiment from a grateful recipient: Your loved one didn't die so that I could live, but I lived because of your loved one's kindness & generosity.

Websites to research the facts:

UNOS – www.unos.org

Donate Life – www.donatelife.net

The Living Legacy Foundation – www.thellf.org

Washington Regional Transplant Community – www.beadonor.org

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