

If you had the chance to save a life—or even eight—would you take it? For me, the answer has always been yes. That’s why I registered as an organ, eye, and tissue donor when I was old enough. While that decision may have taken less than five minutes, its significance is lifelong. Becoming a donor is one of the most selfless and impactful choices a person can make. Organ, eye, and tissue donation isn’t just a medical procedure—it’s a powerful act of hope, compassion, and human connection. As someone entering adulthood and preparing for a future career in service, I see this decision as an ethical responsibility and a personal reflection of the legacy I hope to leave behind.

In the United States, over 100,000 people are currently waiting for life-saving organ transplants (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). That number is staggering—and deeply personal. I know people in my personal community and family who’ve waited for kidneys, liver transplants, and cornea donations. Some have survived. Some didn’t. Every 10 minutes, someone new is added to the national transplant list. On average, 17 people die each day simply because a donor wasn’t available in time (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). The reality is stark: we don’t have a shortage of capable donors—we have a shortage of registered ones.

One reason so many people hesitate to register is misinformation. I’ve heard the myths myself. “Doctors won’t try as hard to save you if they know you’re a donor.” “I’m too old to be of any help.” “My religion doesn’t support organ donation.” However, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, these concerns are based on false assumptions. Medical teams prioritize saving every patient’s life, regardless of their donor status. And age or health conditions don’t automatically disqualify someone from becoming a donor—every potential donor is evaluated individually (National Institute on Aging). In fact, one of the oldest recorded organ donors in the U.S. was over 90 years old. Additionally, nearly all major religions—including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism—support donation as charity and love (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

As a young adult about to enter my first year of university, these facts carry weight. Like most of my peers, I’m learning how to navigate new responsibilities—from budgeting and studying to balancing work and relationships. I work part-time at Trader Joe’s to support myself, and every dollar I earn is money I’ve made on my own. I view my body, time, and energy as resources—things to care for, protect, and, if ever possible, share. Registering as a donor felt like the natural extension of that mindset. It’s something I can give without cost to myself but with immeasurable value to someone else.

Organ and tissue donation can transform lives in challenging ways to capture them fully. One donor can save up to eight lives through vital organs and enhance more than 75 lives through tissues such as corneas, skin, and tendons (News in Health, NIH). That means a child

could see their mother again. A burn victim could heal. A father could return home to his family. These aren't theoretical possibilities—they're real, documented outcomes stemming from everyday people saying "yes."

What's more, being a donor doesn't just impact recipients. It offers a sense of meaning and peace to donors' families, knowing their loved ones made a difference. Studies have shown that donor families often find comfort in knowing that something beautiful came from their loss—an affirmation that even in death, there was a life-giving purpose (Sque et al. (2006)).

If we want to build a future rooted in compassion and collective care, organ and tissue donation must be part of the conversation. It should be normalized in schools, discussed in doctor's offices, and integrated into our digital and social platforms. Most importantly, it should be a topic we discuss openly with our families. It's not enough to register—your loved ones should know your decision so that, if the time comes, they can honor it confidently.

Registering is easy. You can sign up online at [organdonor.gov](https://www.organdonor.gov), indicate your preference when renewing your driver's license, or check the box through your state's health department. It takes only a few clicks to declare that your legacy will be one of generosity and life.

I believe what we do in life echoes far beyond our experience. When I think about what kind of adult I want to become, what kind of community I want to live in, and what kind of world I hope we can build—I come back to this one truth: we are all connected. And in that connection lies an incredible power to uplift, heal, and save.

Organ, eye, and tissue donation is ultimately about building bridges between strangers and giving them a second chance at life. It is a testament to what we're capable of when we choose empathy over fear and action over indifference. I'm proud to be a donor, and I hope you'll consider becoming one, too.

Works Cited

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