

Jacie White

Patterson Mill Highschool

Legacy of Life Scholarship

Give the Gift of Life: Why You Should Become an Organ, Eye, and Tissue Donor

Every day, thousands of people wait anxiously for a life-saving phone call that may never come. That call offers more than hope—it offers life. It means a new heart, a working kidney, the ability to see again, or the chance to walk without pain. Organ, eye, and tissue donation is not just a medical procedure. It is a powerful act of humanity, one that has the power to save and transform lives. I know this deeply, because my grandfather never got that call.

My grandpa was a strong, proud man who lived a life of hard work and love for his family. But in his later years, his kidneys began to fail. He started dialysis—a painful and exhausting process that became a regular part of his life. We watched him fight with everything he had, clinging to hope that a matching kidney donor would come in time.

But the wait was long and brutal. During dialysis, his body grew weaker. He developed complications that eventually led to his right leg being amputated. Losing his leg wasn't just a physical trauma—it was an emotional blow that stripped away so much of his independence and joy. And still, he waited. We all did. But the kidney never came. And before we could see him recover, before he could get the transplant he desperately needed, we lost him.

My grandpa's story is heartbreaking, but not uncommon. Over 100,000 people in the United States are currently waiting for a life-saving organ transplant. Every 10 minutes, another person is added to that list. And sadly, around 17 people die each day while waiting. These aren't just statistics. They are real people—mothers, fathers, children, friends—all hoping for a second chance at life.

One organ donor can save up to eight lives. One tissue donor can help improve the lives of 75 others. Eye donors can restore sight to those who've lost it. It's an incredible gift—one that doesn't cost anything but has the power to change everything for someone in need.

So why don't more people register? Often, it comes down to misunderstandings. Some fear that doctors won't try to save them if they're registered as a donor. That's completely false. Medical teams always focus on saving your life first. Donation is only considered after every possible life-saving measure has been exhausted, and under strict ethical and medical protocols.

Others worry that donation goes against their religious or cultural beliefs. But the truth is, nearly all major religions—including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism—support organ donation as a final act of compassion and generosity. It's a chance to serve others, even in death.

Registering to become a donor is simple. You can do it online in just a minute or say “yes” when renewing your driver’s license. That small act can lead to the most meaningful impact imaginable: giving someone more time, more memories, more life.

I often think about what could have happened if someone had been a match for my grandpa. What if someone had made the choice to become a donor and that kidney had reached him in time? Maybe he would still be here—maybe we’d still be hearing his laughter, getting his advice, and holding his hand. That’s why I’m sharing his story. Not just to honor him, but to urge you to act.

Please—register to become an organ, eye, and tissue donor. Share your decision with your family and encourage them to do the same. Be the hope someone is praying for. Be the reason another family doesn’t have to say goodbye too soon.

Give the gift of life. Become a donor today.

Sources:

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, OrganDonor.gov

“More than 100,000 men, women and children are on the national transplant waiting list. 17 people die each day waiting for an organ transplant.”

Source: <https://www.organdonor.gov>

2. American Transplant Foundation

“One donor can save up to 8 lives through organ donation and save or improve the lives of up to 75 people through eye and tissue donation.”

Source: <https://www.americantransplantfoundation.org>