

Solace

Spring 2012
Volume 8, Number 1

A Newsletter for Organ and Tissue Donor Families

How Friends and Family Can Help Me with my Grief—*Donor Family Memory Workshops*

How many times have family members and friends asked what they can do for you after the loss of a loved one? The MTS Center for Life is pleased to host a special Donor Family Informational Workshop designed specifically to answer this question. Bring your family and friends and join us for some practical information including: understanding of the grief process, the feelings people often experience during loss, myths about grief, and some suggestions for healing. The Workshop also includes a special time of creating a frame-able scrapbook memory page for each participant.

The scrapbook pages will be scanned and included on the MTS website in the photo gallery and in an MTS Scrapbook. Participants will need to bring copies of special photos for the scrapbook page. MTS will provide all other scrapbooking supplies. The first Memory Workshop will take place on **Tuesday, April 24th in St. Louis at the MTS Main Offices. We will host a Memory Workshop in Cape Girardeau on Saturday, July 21st.** This workshop will be hosted in Springfield, MO in the fall. To **RSVP** for the St. Louis or Cape Workshops, please call **800-925-3666** or email donorfamily@mts-stl.org.



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Recipient Information – A Deeper Understanding

The precious gift of organ and tissue donation provides hope and transforms thousands of lives nationally every year. Donor families often wonder if they will ever know anything about the recipients of their loved one's wonderful gifts or if they will receive correspondence from them.

The amount of information available about the recipients and whether or not a family will receive correspondence is dependent upon the type of donation, organ or tissue, and the type of transplant the recipient received. There is a difference between organ and tissue donation and there are reasons why the amount of recipient information that is available differs.

Tissue Donation:

MTS does not receive direct notification when tissue is transplanted and therefore cannot automatically forward this information to donor families. A specific recipient is not identified prior to the recovery of tissue for transplant.

Most recovered tissue is stored until it can be matched with an appropriate recipient.

Corneas might be used within days to restore eyesight, while lifesaving heart valves might be stored for weeks, months, or years until a perfect match is found.

Upon request from MTS on behalf of the donor family, our partnering organizations who are responsible for distribution of bone, skin, and soft tissue will provide limited recipient information – i.e. the state where the transplant took place and sometimes the gender and age of the tissue recipient. This information is available upon request generally 12 to 18 months following the donation. Due to the limited information we receive on tissue recipients, contact with the tissue recipients cannot be initiated by the donor family.

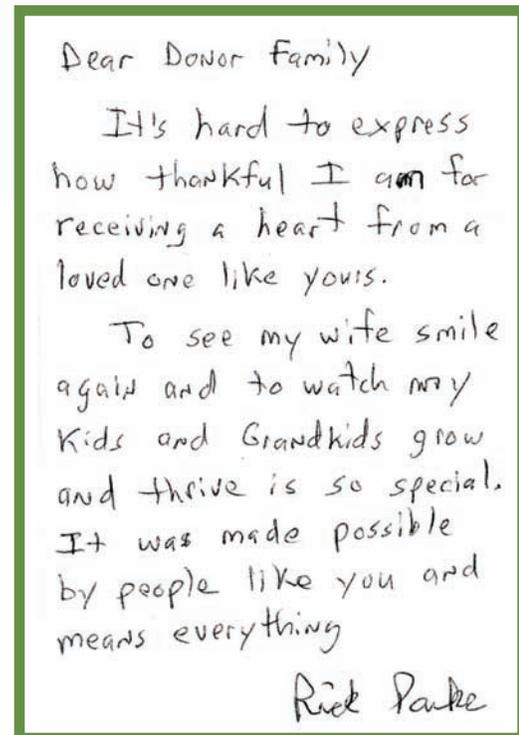
Recognizing most donor families want to receive information and communication

from tissue recipients and the limitations presented with tissue recipient information, the MTS tissue partners have worked with Pathways, an organization founded in 2006, to provide the opportunity for tissue recipients to write to their donor families. This program is dependent upon the recipient initiating the contact. Tissue partners include a postcard with each tissue transplant encouraging recipients to write to donor families with instructions on how to do this. Although the number of thank you letters MTS is receiving from tissue recipients is growing, we know that many of our donor families do not receive one. It is our hope that knowing your loved one was able to enhance or save the life of another person brings you comfort.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is possible only in rare circumstances. The opportunity to recover vascular organs is entirely dependent on the manner of the individual's death. This situation known as brain death is extremely rare, occurring only in an estimated one percent of all deaths. When brain death occurs, organs are viable for only a short period of time and only if a respirator continues to support the body until the organs are recovered.

An MTS Family Support Coordinator assists the family with the consent process at the hospital and lets the family know which of their loved one's organs were used for transplantation. Families receive a letter three to four weeks after the donation containing general information about each recipient, including the age and sex of the recipient, and in some cases how the recipient is doing. A copy of the MTS Correspondence Guidelines is provided to all families who are interested in writing to the recipients. Once the correspondence is received



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comfort,
give moral
or emotional
strength to



April 2012

April 14 – The 2012 Springfield Candlelight Memorial Ceremony
Saturday, 10am to decorate a candle; Ceremony begins at 10:30am
Campbell United Methodist Church
1747 East Republic Road
Springfield, MO 65804

Please visit the MTS website for more details. Photos must be submitted by March 30th to be included in the Ceremony.

April 21 – 3rd Annual Life Saving 5K Run/Walk sponsored by the Celebrate Life Foundation
Registration begins at 8am, Walk/Run begins at 9am at Creve Coeur Park

For more information or to register please contact Allison Vasquez at www.celebratelifemo.org

April 21 – Labyrinth – one day teen grief retreat sponsored by BJC Hospice.

For more information please contact Beth Barrett at 314-872-5050 or bsb2795@bjc.org

April 24 – St. Louis Donor Family Memory Workshop
Monday, 7-9pm MTS St. Louis Office – please see cover article

May

May 5 – S.O.D.A. (Spring Organ Donor Awareness) Run, Dolan City Park, Jerseyville, IL
Registration begins at 7am, Walk/Run at 8am.

For more information please visit www.sodarace.org

July

July 21 – Cape Girardeau Donor Family Memory Workshop
Saturday, 9am-11am St. Francis Hospital Conference Room

I experience a gift everyday because of a donor family like you.
The miracles of medical science would not be able to exceed without the donor family like you.
Thank you for extending my life & able to enjoy the holidays with family

by MTS, it is forwarded to the transplant center and then on to the recipient. Recipients who choose to write to their donor family send their correspondence through the transplant center, which forwards it to MTS. MTS then sends the letter to the donor family.

Some recipients send a note of thanks to the donor family. Often times, the recipients are so overwhelmed by the magnitude of their lifesaving gift they feel they cannot find the right words to thank the donor family. Most recipients have said writing their donor family is the most difficult thing they have ever done. Feelings of guilt or inadequacy,

along with fear of causing the donor family more pain may inhibit the recipient from being able to express their gratitude.

For more information please visit the Support for Donor Families section of the MTS website www.mts-stl.org/support or contact Sandy Jones at 800-925-3666 or sjones@mts-stl.org.

Donor Family Opportunities

Donor Family Memorial Ceremonies

For more than two decades, MTS has been privileged to provide the opportunity for Donor Families to honor and remember their loved ones through Donor Sabbath Ceremonies. These memorial ceremonies have been hosted in St. Louis, Springfield, Cape Girardeau and

Jonesboro. In 2012 MTS will be hosting Candlelight Memorial Ceremonies in St. Louis, Springfield, MO, and Cape Girardeau, MO. Postcard invitations will be mailed to families in the regions one month prior to the event, however all donor families are welcome at

any MTS Candlelight Memorial Ceremony.

For more information about these events, please reference the Solace Calendar of Events or the MTS website – www.mts-stl.org/about/calendar.

Donor Family Quilt Squares

One of the special ways Donor Families have honored their loved one is through the creation of a Donor Family Quilt Square. The squares are joined together in a handmade quilt when 25 squares have been received. The quilts are displayed at MTS Candlelight Memorial Events, sharing the warmth and comfort of these beautiful tributes. MTS is in the process of taking photographs of each quilt square and placing them on the MTS website with a story about the person being honored. This provides the opportunity for Donor Families and friends to share memories of their loved one by viewing the quilts on the MTS website at any time. **For more information about the Donor Family Quilts, please contact Sandy Jones at 800-925-3666 or sjones@mts-stl.org.**



Honor



MID-AMERICA TRANSPLANT SERVICES

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Comments or article ideas ?
Email us at donorfamily@mts-stl.org

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Center for Life Bereavement Support Programs

Following the loss of a loved one, families often share how they wish they could talk with someone who experienced a similar loss and could relate to their feeling and experiences. As a result of this need, the Grief Companion Program has been created. It pairs newly bereaved Donor Families with a Companion who has experienced a similar loss and is further down the path in the grief journey. **If you are interested in participating in the Grief Companion Program to receive support or to be trained as a Companion at the next training in the Fall of 2012, please contact Sandy Jones at 800-925-3666 or sjones@mts-stl.org.**

MTS also provides Grief Support Groups, Donor Family Memory Workshops, referrals to community resources, and referrals for individual counseling.

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