

Donate Life Month In-my-opinion piece

Get a “D” ... and save a life.

By Mary Jane Hunt and Tom McClellan

It's one simple step that can turn the world upside down – in a positive way – for so many people.

It can mean the difference between life and death for a young mother with congestive heart failure who desperately wants to see her children grow up. It can help someone's grandfather continue his lifelong love of reading great books. It can free a busy college student from the rigors of three-times-a-week kidney dialysis. It can mean a young child suffering from burn wounds can play outside again, pain free.

It can – and does – mean all this, and more. April is national Donate Life Month, and there's no better time to talk about what, understandably, can be an emotional and sometimes difficult subject – to decide about making an organ, eye and tissue donation.

All you have to do here in Oregon is take a simple step. Mark the “D” on your Oregon driver's license application when you're up for renewal or when you're getting your license, permit or ID card for the first time. Or you can go online any time at www.donatelifenw.org or request a paper form by calling 1-800-452-1369.

Making the decision about becoming a donor has become easier and more effective. Last May, organ, eye and tissue recovery agencies began accepting the driver's license as official consent, eliminating the emotional burden for families in making the decision. The new process brings the law, the practice and public perception together with this one marker on the driver license – vastly improving the system for donor identification and, most importantly, honoring a donor's wish.

Donate Life Northwest (formerly known as the Oregon Donor Program) and the Oregon DMV (part of the Oregon Department of Transportation) are working together to accurately record a person's organ, eye and tissue donation decisions – and to explain how easy it is to do now, thanks to the “D.” Mark a “D” on your driver's license, permit or ID card, and your wishes have the legal standing to be carried out.

You may see posters in DMV offices reminding you to register as a donor. You may hear about transplant recipients whose lives have been miraculously turned around because someone cared enough to put a “D” on his or her driver's license, permit or ID card.

Young drivers age 15 to 29 are a special focus during Donate Life Month this year since they are particularly difficult to reach about the importance of registering as a donor.

Please take time – now – to talk with your family members about your wishes to become a donor. Then register to be a donor. You will save a life.

For more information about becoming an organ, eye or tissue donor, visit:
www.donatelifenw.org

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