



Media kit updated 3/31/06
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Organ and Tissue Donors Making Miracles and Transforming Lives

It's a miracle. It's a gift. It's the power to transform lives.

Every day, organ and tissue donors give the ultimate gift – the gift of life – to someone who would not survive without a transplant. Thousands of Americans, including 1,644 in Colorado, wait and hope for the news that a vital organ is on the way. For too many, time just runs out.

"You might think the best day of my life was the day I won the Olympic medal, but the most beautiful day was when someone decided to be an organ donor and saved my life," says liver recipient Chris Klug in a public service announcement. Klug encourages Americans to commit to organ donation and to talk to their families about their decision.

Chris received a second chance at life thanks to a stranger's decision to donate their loved one's organs. "Because of that generosity, I was able to represent America at the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics." Chris attended the Olympics just 18 months after receiving the transplant.

Nine years ago, Chris was diagnosed with a rare, degenerative liver condition. He says the waiting was the hardest part. "I wore a pager every minute of the day and carried a cell phone as a backup in anticipation of receiving a call informing me that a liver was available that matched my blood type," he said.

"I was extremely lucky. I received a perfect match and had a great team of doctors...I was back on the World Cup snowboarding circuit four months after my surgery. It was scary and difficult at times, but I realized what it's like to receive the gift of life and what it means to have a second chance. I intend to make the most of it and to continue spreading the life-saving message of organ donation."

There are many other stories like Chris. People who can take another breath thanks to their new heart or lungs. People who can survive another day thanks to a new kidney or liver. People who can see for the first time thanks to a cornea from a stranger. People who've survived thanks to a donation of bone, skin, blood, veins, or other tissue.

These are the stories of people who give and receive the ultimate gift – the gift of life. The need is great but the reward is greater. To find out more, visit the Donor Awareness Council Web site: www.donor-awareness.org .

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ABOUT THE DONOR AWARENESS COUNCIL

MISSION: The Donor Awareness Council is a nonprofit coalition formed to increase organ and tissue donation through public awareness and education within our community.

HISTORY: The Donor Awareness Council is a non-profit coalition formed in 1989 and is the only organization in Colorado and Wyoming whose soul mission is to increase donation through education and awareness.

The Council is governed by a Board of Directors and works with other partners in coalition to provide education and awareness throughout Colorado and Wyoming.

The Donor Awareness Council conducts public policy education programs and relies on its extensive network of volunteers that support and implement public outreach programs.

COALITION PARTNERS:

- AlloSource
- American Liver Foundation, Rocky Mountain Chapter
- American Transplant Association, Rocky Mountain Chapter
- Black Transplants Action Committee
- Bonfils Blood Center
- The Children's Hospital
- Clinimmune Labs
- Donor Alliance
- Laboratories at Bonfils
- National Kidney Foundation of Colorado, Montana and Wyoming
- Presbyterian/St. Luke's Medical Center
- Rocky Mountain Lions Eye Bank
- Statline
- University of Colorado Hospital

AWARENESS PROGRAMS:

- Say "Yes" Campaign at Colorado & Wyoming Driver License Offices
- Donor Registry Drives
- Bonfils Blood Center Partnership
- National Donor Day (February)
- National Donate Life Month (April)
- National Donor Sabbath (November weekend)
- Colorado/Wyoming Donor Awareness Creative Challenge
- Public Policy Development
- "Done Vida" Spanish Language Campaign
- Donor Awareness Volunteer Network
- Speakers Bureau
- Health Fairs/Public Events
- Driver's Education Program
- Coalition on Donation Public Service and Advertising Campaigns

FUNDING:

The Donor Awareness Council is a nonprofit 501(c) (3) organization. Funding comes mainly from the Colorado Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Fund. Voluntary public contributions are made through renewing or obtaining a Colorado Driver License or ID.

Coalition partners, as well as corporations and individuals, contribute funds directly to the organization. To contribute on-line log onto www.donor-awareness.org

CONTACT:

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DID YOU KNOW.....

- 1 organ donor could save the lives of up to 8 people.
- 1 tissue donor could enhance the lives of up to 100 people.
- Most religious organizations support organ & tissue donation – viewing it as the ultimate act of charity.
- There are no age restrictions to be a donor.
- Rarely does one's health condition rule out a donation – even those with cancer or diabetes can be donors.
- In 2005, 62% of Colorado drivers said “YES” to organ donation compared to 33% in 1998. In Wyoming it was 85%.
- Becoming a donor is easy:
 - When you renew or apply for a Colorado or Wyoming driver's license, indicate “YES” on the donor registration box. Your name will then be added to the organ donor registry.
 - In Colorado, a red heart will appear on your license. In Wyoming, the word “DONOR” will appear on your license.
 - You can join the Colorado Organ and Tissue Donor Registry, a secure and confidential database, by registering on-line at www.coloradodonorregistry.org or www.wyomingdonorregistry.com or calling 888-388-8605.
 - You can also register to be a donor when you give blood at Bonfils Blood Center.
- Only certain types of organs can be donated: **heart, lung, kidney, liver, small intestine and pancreas.**
- Other types of donations include: **bones** (to prevent amputations), **heart valves** for children born with heart problems or adults with heart disease, **skin (tissue cells)** for burn victims, **corneas** for sight restoration, **ligaments and tendons** to repair injured joints and **stapleous veins** for bypass surgery.
- Living people can donate a kidney, a liver, a lung or become a blood donor or join the national registry of bone marrow.

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MYTHS/REALITIES

Often times, people are misinformed about organ and tissue donation and consider urban legends as truth. The Donor Awareness Council urges people to separate the difference between myth and fact. Here are several examples:

Myth: *There is an age limit to becoming a donor.*

Reality: Anyone can be a donor regardless of their age. If the donor is under 18 it requires parental consent.

Myth: *My chronic health problems make me ineligible for donation.*

Reality: A person's health condition does not automatically rule out donation – even those with cancer or diabetes can be a donor. Medical suitability is determined at the time of death.

Myth: *My religion doesn't support organ and tissue donation.*

Reality: All major religions approve of organ and tissue donation. They consider it a gift, an act of charity. Many religions have position statements on donation. You can find some of them on the Donor Awareness Council web site.

Myth: *Once I'm in the Donor Registry, my decision is no longer private.*

Reality: The Colorado Organ & Tissue Donor Registry is a secure, confidential database. Only official organ and tissue recovery agencies have access to the Registry and the only information they have is your identity and decision to be a donor. Colorado law prohibits Registry information from being sold or shared with any other company or government agency.

Myth: *The donation system can't be trusted. They might take something I don't want them to take.*

Reality: Donors can specify which organs and tissues they want donated. They can do this by communicating any exclusions to their family.

Myth: *Rich and famous people get moved to the top of the list. Regular people have to wait a long time for a transplant.*

Reality: The organ allocation and distribution system is blind to wealth, social status, race, gender, or age. The length of time it takes to receive a transplant is governed by many factors, including blood type, length of time on the waiting list, severity of illness and other medical criteria.

Myth: *If I'm on a donor list and get in an accident, the doctors won't try to save my life.*

Reality: The medical team treating you is separate from the transplant team. The organ procurement organization (OPO) is not notified until all lifesaving efforts have failed and death has been determined.

Myth: *My body will be disfigured and treated badly.*

Reality: Donated organs are removed surgically in a routine operation similar to gallbladder or appendix removal. Donation doesn't disfigure the body or change its appearance in a casket.

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FAST FACTS ABOUT ORGAN DONATION

Local stats:

- At the close of 2005, 1,546 people in Colorado awaited a life-saving organ. Today, that number has increased by 98 to 1,644
- In Colorado, 902 people are currently waiting for a kidney
- In Colorado, 62% of people who obtained or renewed their driver's license in 2005 said 'yes' to donation; in Wyoming, that number is 85%
- In 2005, Donor Alliance recovered organs for transplant from 125 local donors, and tissue for transplant from 722 donors, record high recovery numbers for the organization
- In 2005, 395 total organs were transplanted
- Of the 722 tissue donors in 2005, 51% were on the Registry; of the 125 organ donors, 34% were on the Registry

National stats:

- At the close of 2005, 90,286 people were on the waiting list. Today that number is 91,019 – an average of 245 people being added to the waiting list each month
- Recoverable organs include: heart, lung, liver, kidney, pancreas and small bowel
- Tissues that are recoverable include: bone, tendons and corneas as well veins, valves and skin
- One donor can save up to eight lives through organ donation and enhance up to 100 lives through tissue donation
- Every year, the lives of about 500,000 Americans are saved and enhanced by organ and tissue donation
- An average of 18 people die each day from the lack of available organs for transplant
- Every 12 minutes another name is added to the national transplant waiting list
- In 2004, the gift of sight was donated by over 42,000 eye donors; 32,106 corneal transplants were performed in the US
- Approximately 1,000,000 tissue transplants are performed annually

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