

**"GIVE OF YOURSELF"**  
(4th Draft 1/20/98)

Every eighteen minutes another man, woman, or child is placed on the waiting list for an organ transplant. Each year, almost four thousand of these people will die - - - simply because not enough donors were available.

Transplant recipients such as Holly, Sergio, Melanie, and Arthur have gone on to lead perfectly normal, productive, and healthy lives because a donor family made a giving and unselfish decision - the decision to donate a loved one's organs after death.

Each year transplants save the lives of thousands of people all over the world. Over a half million more people receive life-enhancing tissue transplants which enable them to see, to stand, to walk, and to live healthy lives free of pain and crippling infirmities.

Twelve-year-old Brian is able to enjoy an active, athletic life today because nearly nine years ago he received a heart transplant that saved his life.

**Kimberly Mack**  
**Brian's Mother**

At 15 months old, Brian contracted a virus that settled in his heart muscle and destroyed it. / The surgeons told me that Brian was no longer responding to conventional therapy, and that the only alternative was to have a heart transplant, and at that time, they figured that his window of opportunity was two months to receive the transplant in order to save his life.

**Hellane Mack**  
**Brian's Grandmother**

When we found out that Brian would die if he did not receive a transplant, the bottom just fell out of my life. The thought of losing him so young, without a chance of him having any part of life, was devastating. But with the transplant, and I look at him today, you couldn't find a happier grandmother because he is a normal, healthy little boy, but without it, we wouldn't have had him. / There are days that I'll just walk up to him and just hug him for no reason, but I'm just so happy to have him. He's so active. He never stops, either the brain or the body. It never, never stops, and I do, I'll just walk up to him and he'll say "What's that for, Grandma?", and I'll say "Just 'cos." But I'm so happy to have him.

**Kimberly Mack**

Today, we're having a special party in honor of Brian's ninth anniversary that just passed three days ago, and we're taking a bunch of friends out to have a big swim party and a barbecue, just to kind of acknowledge the fact that we've made another milestone and completed another year.

**Kimberly SOT:** Okay, guys, we are all here in celebration, appreciation, and recognition of the ninth anniversary of Brian's heart transplant, and in connection with, this is for you.

**Brian SOT:** Happy ninth anniversary, Brian. Wishing you many more years of good health, happiness, and straight A's in school. Love, Mom.

**Hellane Mack**

The child that Brian's heart came from donated all of his organs, which means he saved five children, and that's a very unselfish thing of his family, and we thank them every day, and we've asked God to look over them and keep them well because they were a very unselfish group of people.

**Kimberly Mack**

To see my son out there playing basketball right along with all the other kids who haven't had a heart transplant really warms my heart because I wondered after the transplant if he'd be able to be a normal little boy, and he's right out there with all the other little kids, keeping up with everybody else, just like all the other little boys.

Despite the medical success of transplantation, there is one aspect of organ donation that technology has not been able to solve, and that is the critical shortage of organ and tissue donors. Today, thousands of people are waiting for life-saving organ transplants. Hundreds of thousands more need tissue transplants.

Each donor has the potential to save or enhance the lives of up to 50 other human beings. All the major internal organs, the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys and pancreas can now be successfully transplanted. Human tissue such as corneas, skin, bones, tendons, and veins are also transplantable. After transplant, the patient's transition from life-threatening or crippling conditions is nothing short of miraculous.

Thirty-three-year-old Arthur Kaniasty suffered from diabetes and kidney disease for many years until he received a long-awaited transplant.

**Arthur Kaniasty**

**Kidney-Pancreas Recipient**

In 1994, I received a kidney and pancreas transplant, and because I received both a kidney and pancreas, this not only solved my kidney disease problem, but also cured me of diabetes. No longer do I have to do dialysis or insulin shots.

Compared to dialysis, life is so much freer. It's like a ball and chain. You're in a prison. You're limited to where you can go. You have to be within a day away from your dialysis unit. But now I feel wonderful. It beats taking insulin shots. It beats getting dialyzed for three hours three times a week. That was tedious and draining. I'd come home with no energy. I'd have no appetite. Now I have a full appetite. I've gained weight. I'm much more energetic. I find myself playing tennis, riding bicycles.

My friend James and I love to go rock climbing, and if you would have asked me four years ago if I'd ever be doing this, I would have said "No way" because I didn't have the energy, the strength. Today, I have life. I have energy, vigor. I love to go rock climbing.

I received my kidney from a young man who was my age, and because of this important decision that was made by his family, I am now healthy, and I pray for the soul of this young man, and the beautiful decision his family made to give me quality, to give me life.

The fact is, if everybody who could donate, actually did, in time there would be enough donors to meet the needs of everyone on the waiting list. However, the problem remains that only about a third of those people who are able to become donors when they die, actually end up donating their organs. Why so few? There are some very basic fears and misconceptions about organ donation that need to be addressed.

First of all, some people are afraid that once they sign a donor card, they won't get the best medical care if they become critically ill or are seriously injured in an accident. The fact is, organ donors are typically people in good health who die suddenly from motor vehicle accidents, head trauma, or gunshot wounds. Organ donation takes place only after all efforts to save or restore life have failed - in other words, when the patient is dead.

**Dr. Gabriel Danovitch**  
**Medical Director**  
**Kidney Transplant Program at UCLA**

The only way a person can become a cadaveric organ donor is to be dead. The great majority of cadaveric organ donors are, in fact, "brain dead" because under these circumstances, their major body organs: heart, liver, kidneys, etc., can be used safely for transplantation. The fear of having the "plug pulled" is not a realistic fear. There is no connection between the team of doctors that look after a patient, between them, and between the team of doctors that are involved in transplantation. "Brain death" is determined by doctors who are totally independent from the transplant team using internationally-recognized criteria.

Another concern of donors and their families is the fear that the donor's body is somehow mutilated during the donation process. Surgical recovery of organs and tissues takes place in a sterile operating room with a full team of specially-trained surgeons and nurses. The donor's body is treated with respect like any other surgical patient. ~~Only a midline incision is made to recover the organs.~~ There is no mutilation. The family can still have a normal open-casket funeral, and all major religious faiths approve of and support organ and tissue donation. In addition, there is absolutely no cost to the donor family for organ or tissue recovery.

Though whether or not to become a donor is a very personal decision, the family's role in the donation process is extremely important. Even if you sign and carry a donor card, your next of kin must still say yes in order for you to donate your organs. The Perez family is very grateful to the donor family whose unselfish decision saved the life of 29-year-old Sergio.

**Sergio Perez**  
**Heart Recipient**

About nine years ago, I was diagnosed with congestive heart failure, and my doctors told me if I didn't get a heart transplant within six months, I would die. When they told me this, I was in a bit of a shock because I was so young, had just gotten married, and a newborn, and it was hard.

**Rosa Perez**  
**Sergio's Wife**

When the doctors told him he had six months to live, as he, I was very shocked. Being so young, we just didn't think that this was going to happen, and with Jocelynn just being born, it was very difficult. Before the transplant, Sergio went down to 120 pounds. ~~He was weighing, he looked a lot thinner than me, he was, to me he looked like just his eyes were sunken in.~~ You could see that the life was being sucked out of him. It was really difficult. He was so thin. And after the transplant, he's gained all his weight back. He looks great. He looks really healthy, and he is lifting weights now which he used to do before, and physically, he just looks like a different person.

**Sergio Perez**

I really enjoy weight-lifting. I do it about three times a week for about a half-hour to 45 minutes. I try to keep in shape. You know, stay strong, keep the heart strong.

**Jocelynn Perez**  
**Sergio's Daughter**

My daddy coaches my soccer team, and if he hadn't have had his transplant, we wouldn't be able to do our special things like riding our bikes, playing softball, and playing soccer.

**Rosa Perez**

Organ donation is very important. It's given us an opportunity, given Sergio an opportunity to see his daughter grow, to spend more time with his family, which is very important to him, and I think it's very important that people talk to their families, let them know. Although they may sign their form on the license, it's really important that they communicate with their family and let them know exactly what they want to do should they have to make that decision for them.

When your family knows what you want to do about donation, it's much easier for them to carry out your wishes, but if you've never talked about it, it can put quite a strain on your loved ones to have to make a decision just as they've lost you. When donors have not discussed this decision with their families, donation occurs only about one third of the time. When donors have discussed the decision to donate with family members, donation takes place almost 100% of the time.

**Rosa Perez**

Sergio received his heart from a young 26-year-old ~~who died in a motorcycle accident, trauma to the head. It was instant death, and that's all we know.~~ We don't know the family, but we definitely are very thankful to the family for making that decision, and thankful to the communication that this person obviously had with the family before this happened so that they were able to decide to donate the organs. You know, aside from thinking they are losing somebody, but they thought about they are actually giving somebody else the opportunity to continue living, and not only did they donate the heart, they donated other parts of the body, ~~and it made, I believe, like 30 other people, it saved their lives.~~

Since donors cannot speak for themselves at the crucial time, the donors' families, their next-of-kin must support the donors' wishes and give consent for donation to take place.

Like many families, the Mendozas never thought they'd have to make a decision, especially about their 16-year-old son, Damion who died suddenly when he was about to enter his senior year of high school.

**Paul Mendoza**

**Damion's Father**

We were stunned and devastated when Damion died. He was so young, and so healthy, and had his whole life ahead of him.

**Carlene Mendoza**

**Damion's Mother**

We wanted some good to come out of Damion's death. We knew within our hearts that that's something that he would have done because he was always helping other people, so we never hesitated in making that decision, once we knew that he was really gone.

**Paul Mendoza**

We are so glad today that we made that decision to donate Damion's organs. His heart, both kidneys, his corneas, his liver, and cells from his pancreas were all successfully transplanted, and somewhere today, there is someone out there that is leading a very healthy life with their family because of Damion's caring and giving.

**Carlene Mendoza**

We are so proud of Damion's legacy. We know we made the right decision, and it's brought a lot of comfort to us.

By saying yes to donation, donor families like the Mendozas have saved more than a hundred thousand lives in the last decade. At a time of great personal tragedy, their selfless, caring acts of love and kindness to strangers they will never know have given a second chance to people like 54-year-old Melanie whose kidney disease left her weak and listless.

**Melanie Sweet**  
**Kidney Recipient**

When I was on dialysis, I really just did exist. I did not do anything that I didn't have to. ~~I had a very difficult time even going grocery shopping.~~ Some people do quite well on dialysis, but I was not one of those. I was one of those that it kept me alive, but that was all. As far as any social life, it went by the wayside completely, and I was just waiting for a kidney transplant because I knew I didn't want to live like that the rest of my life.

**Heather Sweet**  
**Daughter**

I saw a great difference between my mother before the transplant and after the transplant. Before the transplant, she was very lifeless. She would sleep most of the day. ~~She had very little energy to go shopping, to just do her daily tasks and chores around the house, and just to go out and have fun.~~ After the transplant, it was just weeks after the transplant, and she was a completely different woman. She had so much energy, that I found myself having a hard time keeping up with her because she was doing so much. She was almost making up for lost time, she had not been able to experience before.

**Melanie Sweet**

Now I really like having my grand kids come over. I look forward to it. We do physical things like going to the park and feeding the ducks, pulling them in the wagon. The little one, I'm able to keep up with all day, and we really enjoy each other. I get down on the floor and play with her. It's just a real blessing to be able to have that time with them.

**Cap Sweet**  
**Husband**

It's fantastic to have gone through the transplant and watch her come back to 100%, to come back and be a loving, wonderful wife and grandmother and mother to our daughters.

**Cydnie Elliot**  
**Daughter**

Since my mom has received her kidney transplant, she has been able to take the girls out in the back yard and play with them, take them into the spa and teach them how to swim, and just in general, just be the type of grandmother that every daughter would want from their mother.

**Cap Sweet**

One thing that we've instructed our children to do is to cooperate with medical people, to see that the right things will be done at the right time. It's very important to talk to your family. ~~One person in the family can destroy something that can become something beautiful for somebody else.~~ You just can't understand the feelings, the emotion, that we have for a family that gave of themselves so we have ourselves back.

Each year, for every one person like Melanie who does receive a transplant, at least three others have to wait another year or longer before a matching donor is found.

Sometimes, because of the donor shortage, help does not arrive in time. For 7-year-old Holly, the window of opportunity nearly closed.

**Lynn Blythe  
Holly's Mother**

Holly was about two and a half months old when she was diagnosed with an inoperable heart tumor. The doctors told us that she would need a heart transplant in order to survive. ~~When the doctors told us this, it was scary. We didn't know what to do. About a month later, Holly had a severe cardiac arrest at home. Basically, it took them about 35 minutes to bring her back at that time.~~ It took about several weeks for Holly to get stabilized, then we got the call that there was a heart for her that morning. They air-lifted her from UCI on Life Flight to Loma Linda. If the heart hadn't gotten there that day, she would not have made it. That was the day for her. If it wasn't for that donor, Holly would not be here today.

**Bruce Blythe  
Holly's Father**

I think about it every day. Some days, a little bit more than others, but it gives me a really warm feeling inside knowing that she had a second chance due to somebody else being able to give of themselves, to give a gift as precious as what they gave. Holly and I do most everything together because I'm fortunate enough to work an early enough shift that I'm home in the afternoons. Whatever she wants to do, we'll do.

**Lynn Blythe**

When I see Holly and Bruce playing soccer, baseball, I just thank God every day for her, and just to keep her healthy, you know, watch her grow.

Although transplantation is the only life-saving cure for those with end stage organ failure, hundreds of thousands of others have received tissue donations that have significantly improved their lives. William Stivelman, legally blind at age 15, had his sight restored in both eyes with cornea transplants. Today, he is a practicing ophthalmologist who performs micro laser surgery.

**William Stivelman, M.D.  
Cornea Recipient**

By the time I had reached 10th grade, my vision had deteriorated to the level where I really had to get to within one or two inches of a text to read the print, and only at that point with one eye. It was not possible for me to drive a motor vehicle safely, but the consideration of college, post graduate school, medical school, would have been absolutely inconceivable with this level of vision, ~~because I could not have done the necessary studying to complete any degree of any kind.~~

The nature of microsurgery as an ophthalmologist, especially with my interest in laser surgery specifically, requires that I be able to resolve areas as small as 50 microns to 100 microns in some cases, and that degree of resolution would not be possible without my grafts, and in fact, having had the grafts makes my being an ophthalmologist and a laser surgeon possible.

The benefits of the graft permit me to participate in photography still actively, and photograph my family and document my travels, which is one of my greatest pleasures. Without my grafts, I don't think I'd be putting a camera in my hands and taking a picture.

The donation of corneas, of tissue, for me, rendered me whole. It made me a complete person, and it made me independent. It gave me my independence.

Although the need for organ and tissue donors is steadily increasing, the number of people who become donors after death has remained virtually the same with no real increase. ~~Since transplantation is the only life-saving cure for those with end-stage organ failure,~~ each of us can help to resolve this crisis, and in turn, help to save the lives of others by doing two very simple things.

First, sign and carry a donor card which is available at your local Rotary Club or Department of Motor Vehicles.

Second, it is extremely important to discuss your wishes with your family or next-of-kin. This includes your spouse, parents, adult children, grandparents, brothers and sisters, and other relatives. Let them know that when the time comes, you wish to "give of yourself" to help save the lives of others by becoming a donor.

**CLOSING MUSIC MONTAGE** *(with slo-mo video of our recipients enjoying life/family)*

**VO Sergio Perez/Heart Recipient:** Organ donation is very important. It saved my life, and if people would sign their donation cards on their license and speak with their families, it would save a lot of other lives.

**VO Kimberly Mack/Brian's Mother:** In order to fully understand the importance of organ donation, you've got to come in contact with at least one person so that you can see how it changes a life. ~~There's no words that can describe how important organ donation is.~~ You have to see children like Brian and people whose lives have been totally and completely changed for the better as a result. There are no words that can describe how important organ donation is.

**VO William Stivelman/Cornea Recipient:** If an individual is in need of tissue or an organ in order to sustain life or to preserve the quality of life, and that tissue or organ can no longer be used by someone who has met an untimely demise and is healthy and can donate, it is the ultimate gift.

**POST SCRIPT** *(freeze frame of 10-year-old Jocelynn Perez with following text roll)*

Three months after this filming, 10-year-old Jocelyn Perez was diagnosed with the same heart ailment that almost cost her father, Sergio, his life.

Today, she is on the waiting list for a heart transplant.....