

The gift of life



The Gift of Life by Deborah Greenp One of the greatest miracles of modern medicine is the ability to successfully transplant human organs, such as kidneys, corneas and hearts, into human beings who would die otherwise. At this very moment, 48, 000 people are waiting hopefully for organ transplants (Tenery 20). Seven of these unfortunates will die each day because there are no organs to be had (Hans 84). For them the wait is over. Today, I'm going to tell you why you should become an organ donor and perhaps save the life of one or more of these people. People whose organs don't function properly live half lives that affect not just themselves but everyone they love as well-- their children, their spouses, their mothers, fathers, family and friends. An individual whose kidneys don't function can't develop and cultivate a career. A child whose heart is weak can't get out and run with her friends. A man with a bad liver may not be able to keep his job. Thus candidates for organ donation feel guilty. They become invalids, unable to spend quality time with those they love, and fearful of the burden they are placing on their families. Let me make this real for you. Her name was Claire. She was the mother of two small children.

When her kidneys stopped functioning, she felt that her life was over. Three times a week she spent half a day in dialysis and the rest of the day recovering from the procedure. She never had any energy and was always exhausted. Her illness added 20 years to her appearance and the constant battle with the side effects of the drugs took its toll. When she became a candidate for a kidney, she was happier than she'd ever been in her life. Unfortunately, she died before an organ became available. It's too late to save Claire, or to repair her children's lives, but there is something each of

us and do to help others like her. We can carry a donor card. A donor card can be carried around in your wallet. It tells doctors that if you die your organs can be used to benefit those like Claire who need them. According to Shanteau and Harris, editors of *Organ Donation and Transplantation*, one donor can provide more than 12 different organs and tissues, yet other studies have found that while most people have a positive attitude toward organ donation, few actually carry donor cards. For instance, a study by the Transportation Council of Southern California found that 77 % of the respondents had a positive attitude toward organ donation, but 1% of those same people carried donor cards. According to Mary Ellen Anton, R. N. , " Misinformation, or the lack of information, can be one of the greatest barriers to organ donation. " A common myth regarding organ donation is that organs will be taken before death has occurred. People also fear excessive costs to their families, and some also believe their religion does not support organ donation. These myths actually have little substance. Death in the form of an absence of brain activity has to be established before organs are taken. There is no cost to the family of the donor, and most religions do support organ donation. It's easy enough to check with your minister, priest, or rabbi. Organ donation is an incredible gift. It can save the life of the one who receives it, but strangely, it also helps the family of the one who died. According to Ellen Heck, director of transplant services at the University of Texas, " Families have told us that donation was the one thing that helped them through the loss. " Think about this carefully. It could be your child or your best friend who needs a kidney. If more people carried donor cards Claire might be alive today, and her daughter, who is only four, might be sitting on her lap right now laughing. In closing let me recap what I've told you. People

whose organs don't function properly--and they could be anyone--need you to be an organ donor. Imagine a child opens her eyes and witnesses a brilliant sunrise for the first time. Her organ donor made that possible. By donating your organs you will give the gift of life and make your own death a meaningful one. Take the literature, read it, sign it, and carry a donor card. It's the right thing to do. Thank you.