

# Kidney Concerns

News for Kidney Patients and Their Families

Spring 2026

Informed, Empowered, Engaged

## In this issue...

### Organ and Tissue donation in your state

My kidney transplant gift came to Wisconsin from a deceased donor from out-of-state. I had a very high antibody count from a prior transplant and it looked like I might never receive a life-enhancing transplant. Out of the blue, my transplant hospital called to offer a kidney which was a great match for me.

Almost nine years later I've lived a new life. Returning to work that I loved, able to travel anywhere without planning dialysis treatments. All because someone that I've never met registered with their state organ and tissue program so their organs and tissues could save someone's life.

Organ and tissue donations are an irreplaceable gift that not only can save someone's life but anonymously creates a lasting legacy. For a new kidney, a beating heart, lungs to breathe air, a tendon to mend an ACL, skin to soothe a burn victim.

Register or re-register now for the organ and tissue donation registry in your state using website links or QR codes below, or at your state DMV office. Make a difference in the world and enable someone to live again!

<https://giftoflifemichigan.org/>

Michigan

<https://donatelifewisconsin.org/>

Wisconsin

<https://www.life-source.org/>

Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota

Jeff Nelson

Consumer Committee Chair



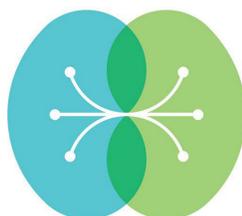
Gift of Life (MI)



Donate Life WI



LifeSource (MN, ND, SD)



**Midwest  
Kidney Network**

# How a Donor Transplant Saved My Life

By Patti B., Michigan

There are so many ways my life changed when I received my donor transplant:

- I could walk up the stairs without being winded
- I could exercise swimming again
- I could drink as much water as I wanted
- My sleep improved
- Necessary dietary adjustments were a small price to pay
- Hope for the future was restored
- No need to conceal the dialysis catheter
- More free time

# Thriving with the Gift of Life

By Mary B., Wisconsin

The Gift of Life has given me an opportunity to not only survive, but to thrive.

As a person who was diagnosed with a rare kidney disease at the age of 9 and has experienced in-center hemodialysis various times in my life. At 17, I had a kidney transplant from my brother, Doug, my amazing living donor. Since then, I have had three more transplants, the last of which was in 1999.

I am a grateful four-time kidney transplant recipient. As a result of this life-long experience, I am passionate and committed to helping other kidney patients. I work hard every day to set an example to be the person who would have made such a difference in my own childhood.

Kidney transplantation gave me the opportunity to live a full and active life with determination and hope for the future.

# Common Deceased Donor Misconceptions vs. Facts

From articles at the NIH, Penn State Health News

- Myth: Doctors won't try to save my life if I'm a donor.
  - **Fact:** The medical team saving your life is entirely separate from the transplant team, and they are legally obligated to provide the best care, only considering donation after all life-saving efforts fail.
- Myth: Brain death is not really "dead."
  - **Fact:** Brain death is the irreversible loss of all brain functions, including the brainstem, which is legally recognized as death. Misinformation often confuses this with a coma or vegetative state.
- Myth: They can take organs while I'm still alive.
  - **Fact:** Organ procurement occurs only after a legal declaration of death (either brain death or cardiac death).
- Myth: I'm too old or unhealthy to donate.
  - **Fact:** Very few medical conditions (e.g., active cancer, severe infection) prevent donation. Organs can be transplanted from donors in their 70s or 80s; physiological age matters more than chronological age.
- Myth: My family has to pay if I donate.
  - **Fact:** There is no cost to the donor's family or estate for organ procurement; it is illegal to buy or sell organs

## Key Takeaways

- Brain death is not a coma; it is irreversible.
- Consent is honored; if you are registered, your wishes are followed, though it is crucial to discuss this with family.
- Vaccination status (e.g., COVID-19) does not prevent someone from being a recipient