Wings of Hope
Thanks given to those who gave life

Hospital honors donors

Donation is a Giant cause
The best man anyone could have hoped for

What could have been a more tragic thing to happen on that September morning? A CHP officer makes a simple traffic stop on a Bay Area freeway. Suddenly, it’s anything but simple or routine. A man pulls a gun, and the officer is mortally wounded. Officer Kenyon Youngstrom, 37, was just doing his job that day. He’d said goodbye to his wife and children and gone to work protecting you and me. Now he was shot and fighting for his life. It’s already an heroic tale, but there’s something more.

Despite prayers, the best medical care available and the support of his family and CHP brethren hoping that his life would be spared, it soon became apparent that was not to be. It was then that Officer Kenyon Youngstrom became a hero again. He became an organ and tissue donor.

Somehow, as they stared at the world through the veil of the devastating loss of someone that meant so much, his loved ones said “Yes” to donation.

“Our grief is overwhelming,” wrote his family – a wife, two sons, two daughters, four brothers, a sister and his parents. “But in his special way, Kenyon carries on in helping others. This was our Kenyon. He’s our hero and, in the midst of our grief, we are comforted to know he continues to help others.”

And he did just that. He saved lives. His gift meant that a father could hug his children before bed, a mother could mentor young daughters, and grandparents could be proud, amazed and in awe of the playground feats of their grandchildren.

All because of Officer Youngstrom and his family.

People say he was a quiet man, someone always ready to help. As they said their goodbyes, one person remarked, “He was the best man anyone could have hoped for.”

We didn’t know Officer Youngstrom of course. But we would have to agree. He chose a line of work to help others, to be an everyday hero. In his death, his family honored him by continuing that legacy.

All of us will continue to grieve for his family, but we should do more to honor this hero. We should do what Officer Youngstrom would have wanted us to do – just help others when you can.

It’s as simple as registering as an organ and tissue donor.

Medals of Honor awarded to 10 partner hospitals

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in October honored hospitals for meeting or exceeding donation goals, including several CTDN hospital partners.

HHS Medals of Honor were awarded to 10 Northern California and Northern Nevada hospitals. The federal agency sets three national standards for organ and tissue donation.

The goals are: an organ donation conversion rate of 75% percent or higher; greater than 3.75 organs transplanted per donor; and at least 10% of all donors recovered via donation after cardiac death. A “conversion rate” represents the figure that of all eligible donors, how many actually became donors. Second goal is to increase the number of organs (i.e. heart, liver) per donor which are able to be recovered. And third, unlike Brain Death (the most common way a person can become a donor), did the hospital have 10 percent or greater donors through cardiac death, when the patient’s heart stopped.

Three hospitals met or exceeded all three standards. Receiving HHS Gold Medals of Honor were: Renown Regional Medical Center in Reno, Nevada; San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center; and Stanford Hospital and Clinics in Palo Alto.

Three hospitals received Silver medals for meeting or exceeding two of the three benchmarks. They were: John Muir Medical Center-Concord; San Joaquin General Hospital in Stockton; and UCSF Medical Center in San Francisco.

Each hospital receiving a Bronze medal met or exceeded one of the three standards. They were: California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco; Enloe Medical Center in Chico; Kaiser Permanente Redwood City Medical Center; and Washington Hospital Healthcare System in Fremont.
Walk or run, everyone was behind donation

Some ran, some ambled, but everyone supported donation. More than 800 people participated in the 2nd Annual Donate Life Walk on September 8, getting in a two-mile walk around Fremont’s Lake Elizabeth.

More than $90,000 was raised at the event. The net proceeds will help California Transplant Donor Network support efforts to register more organ and tissue donors.

Setting off after a DJ countdown, walkers included more than 40 teams. Many people organized around a person they loved or a company they worked for. That included the largest team, the more than 100-member “Team Safeway.” Also walking, “Team Ruben” which honored Ruben Bernal who was an organ donor for Robert Moss, an active Donate Life Ambassador for CTDN. Both families walked together.

The walk raised money to support CTDN’s efforts to spread the word about the need for more people to register as an organ and tissue donor.

Donate Life Walk 2012 participants turned out to support the cause of educating the public about donation. Everyone gathered early in the morning on September 8 at Lake Elizabeth in Fremont for the 2nd Annual Donate Life Walk which drew about 800 walkers, including more than 40 teams.

Recipients walked to thank donor families for their wonderful gifts.

Team Armando gathered beneath the balloon arch which marked the start of the walk. The team was among the largest at the Donate Life Walk. They gathered to honor a toddler who became a donor.

Team Safeway member Leslie Littlejohn pauses to remind everyone that registering as a donor is easy when getting or renewing a driver license at the DMV.

2012 DONATE LIFE WALK SPONSORS

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Kay Huse Award recipients honor their ‘Hero’

Kay Huse, namesake of the CTDN award honoring her tireless volunteer work, lived with her disease all her life. This year her award went to a family whose life was changed in an instant.

Huse award winners, the Zaragoza family of Manteca, have each spent many hours volunteering for CTDN. Jose and Zona Zaragoza’s son, Matthew, died as the result of a collision in a high school football game. Matthew became an organ and tissue donor, saving four lives.

Since that 2005 accident, not only have Jose and Zona been committed to the cause, but Matthew’s grandmother, Valda Van Gelderen and the Zaragozas’ other children, Katrina and Kristy, have told Matthew’s story. How he came to give the gift of life is also told as part of an 11-minute video about organ and tissue donation shown to thousands of high school students in California and Northern Nevada.

“Matthew was our Hero,” said Jose.

To our ‘Humble Hero’ …thank you

On July 5, 2012 Jacob Wallace Sr. passed away. Mr. Wallace, 62, was the husband of California Transplant Donor Network Community Development Liaison June R. Wallace.

To everyone at CTDN, he was also the shining example of the supportive family member.

Jacob was there for June from the moment she began to work for CTDN bringing information about donation to the public, especially in the African American community. Whatever she or CTDN needed to do, Jacob would be there, whether it was driving June to events or making sure that hungry volunteers were fed during June’s work at the annual San Francisco Citywide Revival.

To honor him, CTDN CEO Cindy Siljestrom authorized creation of the “Jacob Wallace Sr. Humble Hero Award” which will be awarded annually to the volunteer who, like Jacob, quietly works behind the scenes to help others understand the powerful message that organ and tissue donation saves lives.

Volunteers are the heartbeat of CTDN, from attending events to providing information or to telling their inspirational stories. Here are some volunteers who continue to shine:

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<th>Volunteers</th>
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<td>Phyllis Monroe</td>
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<td>Jess Chairez</td>
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<td>Caitlin Doyle</td>
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<td>Allie Weese</td>
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<td>Robert Moss</td>
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<td>Michelle Wilson</td>
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One young man loved basketball, the other boxing. They never met, but “boxer” Alfonso Garcia owes “basketball player” George Becker his life. It’s a story set to be told to an international television audience of millions on January 1, 2013.

Alfonso, a young man from the Bay Area, will ride the Donate Life Float in the annual New Year’s Day Tournament of Roses Parade. He’s doing so to honor George. He died suddenly in 2010 and became a donor. His liver saved Alfonso’s life.

Alfonso will represent CTDN as a float rider. Meanwhile, George will be remembered in a floral portrait on the float, which CTDN is also sponsoring. The six-foot, two-inch Becker from the Sacramento area died suddenly of a sinus infection. He was only 22. But when he was 16 years old, George registered as an organ and tissue donor at the DMV as he was signing up for his driver license.

In 2011, his mother, Connie Mays, and George’s father, Rick Becker, met Alfonso and his parents, Marta and Oscar Garcia. “They are humble and grateful,” said Connie. “Even if I had never met them, I would still not doubt George’s decision to donate. But meeting them, seeing what Alfonso has been able to do so far with his life, it’s a loving tribute to our son.”

Alfonso, 18, is a freshman in college. But since his transplant, he and his parents have also pursued a quest to let people know about George’s wondrous gift.

“I don’t take anything for granted. Once I became strong enough, my parents and I decided that we needed to make a difference by talking to people about registering as organ and tissue donors.”

All three are active CTDN Donate Life Ambassadors. “Journeys of the Heart” is the theme of this year’s Donate Life float to be a part of the New Year’s Day spectacle. Featuring 32 float riders and 72 floragraph images like George’s, the float also carries more than 300 roses with personally written dedications to those who gave the gift of life.

“Journeys of the Heart” is the theme of this year’s Donate Life float in the Rose Parade.

A special story to be told on New Year’s Day

A new tower at Enloe Medical Center in Chico is a monument to care and compassion. And so are the flagpoles out front. The “care” is from a Boy Scout, Carson Hunt. He cared enough as an Eagle Scout candidate to organize a fundraising effort to pay for the new poles and then to gather up the volunteer labor to put them up.

And the “compassion” comes from the Donate Life flag. It will be flown on one of the poles to honor the compassion demonstrated by organ and tissue donors and their families. The flag will be lowered to half-staff for 48 hours each time there is an organ and tissue donor from Enloe.

Hunt, the son of Enloe’s Planetree Coordinator, Traci Hunt, RN, is from Troop 31 and attends Durham High School in Durham. At the May event to dedicate the new tower were William Raclin, CTDN Regional Donation Coordinator, and Cathy Olmo, CTDN Director of Communications.

Eagle Scout makes a donation stand at Enloe

At the May ribbon cutting ceremonies for the new Enloe patient tower were: (from left) William Raclin, CTDN Regional Donation Coordinator and Boy Scout Carson Hunt. Above, a placard at the base of the flag pole notes its special purpose.
Heart and liver transplant recipient Michael Brice loves to dance. This summer, fans at AT&T Park in San Francisco saw the youngster’s moves as CTDN and the San Francisco Giants once again partnered for Donate Life Day at AT&T Park.

California Transplant Donor Network’s 15 year partnership with the Giants has allowed thousands of fans to hear organ and tissue donation’s lifesaving message.

In July, they also got to “see” Michael dance as he revved up the crowd and shouted “Play Ball!” at the start of the game. And on the foul lines shagging balls were volunteers and “Ball Dudes” Steve Fratus and Bryson White.

With more than 75 volunteers and staff, CTDN handed out 25,000 player trading cards as fans arrived. On each were three players’ personal messages in support of donation.

“Having the annual Donate Life game with the San Francisco Giants, a well-respected and talented baseball organization, allows us to spread the message of organ and tissue donation among their fan base. We are grateful for this continued opportunity,” said Cindy Siljestrom, Chief Executive Officer for the California Transplant Donor Network.
Reno is a hub of CTDN’s Nevada efforts

Northern Nevada is turning out in force to support organ and tissue donation.

And CTDN is helping. We’ve opened a new office in Reno, held a gathering earlier this year to honor Donor Families and are reaching out to high school students, churches and healthcare providers with information about organ and tissue donation.

Our office is located at 1495 Ridgeview Drive, serving as a hub for staff who work with hospitals and donor families in Northern Nevada to bring the gift of life to those who are waiting. And it’s the center for the public campaign by staff and volunteers to increase registrations on www.donatelifenevada.org.

“There has long been a group of people who live in this area and work with families and hospitals to support organ and tissue donation,” said John Lilley, CTDN Supervisor of Clinical Services. “With the office and other activities, that voice in Northern Nevada for donation grows stronger.”

In addition to the new office, Wendy Knorr, a long-time Reno nonprofit professional, joined the CTDN Team earlier this year. She’s been the focal point of public education campaigns to increase the number of Nevadans registered as donors beyond the current 830,000. She’s helped coordinate more than two dozen presentations to high school students so far this year.

“Helping to enlighten teenagers is a key effort of what we are all about,” said Knorr. “As soon-to-be-drivers, they will be asked if they wish to become donors. We are focused and making sure they can make an educated decision. We also encourage the students to discuss their wishes with their family members.”

Since her arrival, Knorr has received help in that effort. The number of Donate Life Ambassadors joining with CTDN in Northern Nevada has grown from 18 to 41. Among those is Bené Mitchell of Sparks, Nevada. As a kidney transplant recipient, she’s telling her story of how organ and tissue donors can save and improve lives.

Her photo is on brochures and posters in area health clinics and part of the displays when CTDN does public events, like the June gathering in which the dozens of Nevada families whose loved ones donated organs and tissue were honored.

Helping to let Nevadans know how they save lives through organ and tissue donation is a cast of volunteers and supporters. Here are some of them at the June Volunteer Appreciation Picnic in Reno, Nevada.
Hushed tones and a few tears greeted the August unveiling of a 40-panel “Wall of Hope” at Doctors Medical Center in Modesto in the California Central Valley.

State Senator Tom Berryhill, a heart transplant recipient, joined DMC leadership to debut the wall honoring donors and recipients as well providing information about donation. CTDN and Doctors Medical Center unveiled the wall displays as part of an event to mark National Minority Donor Awareness Week.

Stories along the Wall of Hope:

- A mother who recalls the joy of meeting the man who received her son’s heart and learning he had children that he will now see grow up as a result of the gift.
- A toddler whose parents learned at her birth she might be blind but whose sight was restored with the transplantation of two donated corneas.
- A high school football player pictured in uniform. His life ended after a collision during a game but his donated organs and tissues saved the lives of others.
- A mother who holds the picture of her 23-year-old son whose donation of corneas alone restored the sight of two others.
- A woman who at two had been through two liver transplants. She’s pictured as a yellowed, frail baby but also about 20 years later as a student who is studying sign language to help the deaf.
- A teenage, two-time liver recipient having a birthday party with his loved ones.

Andrés Garcia continues to live on in others, says his parents, Salvador and Lilia Garcia. After his sudden death in 2010, they looked through their own grief to help others, saving or improving four lives.

Your gifts make your family proud

Martín, your family is proud of you. You’re gone, and deeply missed. But your gifts mean your family member no longer has to be on dialysis and another man is also freed from that grueling process as well.

Though we are still fresh with grief, we know your life force carries on in others.

A husband and father, Martín became a donor after his death at age 48 in a traffic accident in October 2011. His family also gave his gift of life through tissue donations. With his corneas, he helped restore someone’s sight. With his heart valves, he helped a troubled heart beat stronger.
Heroes of donation

When he died suddenly at only 20 years old in 2011, Mario Jimenez wasn’t done helping others. His mother, Maria Solis (right) donated his organs and tissue. Sister Karen (left) said her brother was humble, but would be proud of his life-giving legacy. With his organ gifts alone, Mario saved and improved the lives of six others.

JePahl White and his panel were part of the Wall of Hope at Doctors Medical Center in Modesto. JePahl is a Donate Life Ambassador and a two-time kidney transplant recipient.

Martín organ donor, as remembered by his wife, Maria. “I am proud because my husband has been able to help others. He lives on in these other people.”

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A woman whose parents were told she would not live into adulthood, who not only married and had children but, thanks to a heart transplant, is now looking forward to many more years.

A young woman who once could walk only a few feet before becoming exhausted. Thanks to a heart and lung transplant, she is making plans to play softball again.

A woman whose life was once threatened by liver disease, but who was alive when her grandchildren were born because the family of a young woman who died suddenly honored her wish to help others through donation.

Cyndi Gunn, donor mother, accepts a medal honoring her decision to donate her 22-year-old son Robert’s organs and tissues from State Senator Tom Berryhill, a Modesto area legislator who is also a heart transplant recipient.

JePahl White and his panel were part of the Wall of Hope at Doctors Medical Center in Modesto. JePahl is a Donate Life Ambassador and a two-time kidney transplant recipient.

State Senator Tom Berryhill with his brother, Bill (rear left) at the Doctors Medical Center event.
Amelia’s life ended but her gift remained

What to expect when expecting. For one young couple expecting their second child, the answer surprised and inspired them.

Alie, 24 and Tyler, 26, met at college in Utah. Introduced at Tyler’s birthday party, two months later they became engaged. Five months later, in December 2008, they married.

Baby Jack came along in November 2010. Tyler got a job and the new family moved to San Diego. Soon after Jack marked his first birthday, the couple learned Alie was pregnant again. Everything was lining up for a wonderful new baby.

But 20 weeks into the pregnancy, an ultrasound they thought would reveal if their new baby was a boy or a girl took a different turn.

“When the radiologist who was doing the procedure suddenly stopped talking, we knew something was wrong. She told us, ‘You need to see your doctor.’ Tears were welling up in my eyes and I couldn’t think straight,” Alie said.

The doctor was tactful but stark — their baby was anencephalic. Missing a fully developed brain, if kept to full term, their baby would either die before or during birth or, in all but the rarest of circumstances, live only hours or a day or two.

“It was hard to believe because as we were getting this news, the baby was kicking inside Alie,” said Tyler.

The first question: Would they keep their baby to term? Yes.

But now there would be no repainting a room from baby boy blue to girly pink. No baby showers. No talking stage. No crawling then walking stage.

Amelia soon after she was born.

Alie and Tyler Jones, at home with Jack, 2

Photos courtesy of Gail Pomare
They named their new baby “Amelia.”

“Once this was confirmed, I began to bond more with Amelia. Each week, I took a picture of myself as my belly grew. I hadn’t done that with Jack. I knew this would be the most time I would have with Amelia,” Alie wrote in her blog. “I was the only one keeping her safe. But after she was born, and she was no longer physically connected to me, I could not keep her safe. I couldn’t do anything to keep her alive.”

Knowing that, the couple confronted the next question from their doctor: “Had they considered donating organs and tissues when the time came?”

It was rare, but technically possible. Too few organs available is a key reason why many infants who need transplants often die. Yes, they would donate.

“Even though Amelia would be dying she could help another baby. That’s how we would want her life to end then, to help someone else,” said Alie.

The fatal birth defect itself presented the greatest obstacle to that. No longer supported by the mother, vital processes in an anencephalic baby such as breathing continue for only few hours or a few days in nearly all cases. The longer the baby survived, the more the organs become medically unsuitable for transplantation.

Tiny Amelia arrived in August, vital and pink. “She was even more beautiful than I imagined,” said Alie.

As the hours passed, the prospects for organ transplantation dimmed but her parents were eventually able to take Amelia home. Two and a half days later, the tiny baby girl lost her fight.

“We always felt our baby was a strong spirit and the fact she lived for two and a half days was evidence she was quite a fighter,” said Tyler.

Alie and Tyler’s faith in a greater purpose sustained them in their daughter’s final moments.

“Amelia’s frail body, once pink and healthy, had become flushed and ashen, and I somehow knew it wouldn’t be long before her spirit left me. I sat there, leaning against our headboard, saddened but overjoyed at the same time. She had been with me for nine months and had become a part of me. We grew emotionally, physically and spiritually together,” Alie recalled.

Amelia’s gifts were heart valves. And the strong partnership between the staff and doctors at Good Samaritan Hospital and staff at CTDN clearly helped ease the family’s burden.

Alie wrote, “Tyler and I want to give a heartfelt thank you to all of the nurses, doctors, transplant staff, and our kind photographer who stood by us, hour after hour. I know it isn’t easy to watch, and there are no words to give that truly comfort. But just being there and standing by us in that lonely hospital room made a difference.”

Today, busy in her comfortable kitchen in San Jose with Jack nearby, Alie wonders, “I often find myself daydreaming about her as a toddler, sitting on that very countertop dangling her feet over the edge,” she writes.

But there is no wondering about the decision to donate.

“Knowing what we know about the blessing that organ and tissue donation can give to others, I can’t imagine anyone would say ‘No’ to that,” said Tyler.

“And so I’m grateful,” Alie writes in her blog. “Even knowing how heart-wrenching this has been, given the chance, I’d do it all over again.”

The couple’s decision to donate their daughter’s tissues could mean heart valves for another infant.
We just wanted to say “Thanks”

A heart transplant recipient and the family of a young woman whose death provided life for five others. This year, dozens of people like these wrote heartfelt letters of thanks to about 330 hospital administrators in Northern California and Nevada to acknowledge support of organ and tissue donation at their hospitals. The handwritten notes, collected by CTDN, were given to the administrators attending a recent conference.

We just wanted to say “Thanks”

Over the last few years, I have had the honor of meeting and becoming friends with Tommy’s heart recipient and his new family. Brian had only 6 weeks to live when he received Tommy’s heart.

Both of our families feel truly blessed to know each other and experience the beauty of how lives can be changed for the better by organ donation.

Our hope is that other families such as ours will be able to find comfort in knowing that our loved one’s legacy has been kept alive.”

Tom Futak

Lost his son, Tommy, 11 years ago. His heart, kidneys, lungs, pancreas, corneas and skin were donated. Photo: Brian, who received Tommy’s heart, and his family with Susie and Tom Futak.

Dear Hospital Administrator,

My name is Jill Nolen and I am a two-time liver recipient. On behalf of all the other recipients I want to thank you for your leadership and ensuring organ and tissue donation is supported at your hospital, so that many others who are desperately awaiting their transplant have a chance at receiving the precious gift of life.

I was diagnosed with Biliary Atresia when I was three months old and was transplanted at the ages of three months and 11 months. I was given two additional chances at life and I intend to make the most of it.

Today, I am almost 23 years post-transplant and I am definitely doing my best to live my life to the fullest with my family and friends through sports, outdoor adventures, coaching gymnastics and college. My chosen college career in the field of Deaf Studies and interpreting shows my desire to “pay it forward.”

Thank you so much for your ongoing support with organ & tissue donation!

Sincerely, Jill A. Nolen
Over the last few years, I have had the honor of meeting and becoming friends with Tommy’s heart recipient and his new family. Brian had only 6 weeks to live when he received Tommy’s heart.

Both of our families feel truly blessed to know each other and experience the beauty of how lives can be changed for the better by organ donation. Our hope is that other families such as ours will be able to find comfort in knowing that our loved one’s legacy has been kept alive.

My sister, Sharon, was an organ and tissue donor. She gave her kidneys, pancreas, liver and corneas to enhance the lives of 5 others and their families. Many other families such as ours can find comfort in knowing that our loved one’s legacy has been kept alive.

Tom Futak lost his son, Tommy, 11 years ago. His heart, kidneys, lungs, pancreas, corneas and skin were donated. Photo: Brian, who received Tommy’s heart, and his family with Susie and Tom Futak.

At age 17, I was diagnosed with Lupus. The lupus attacked my kidneys. I am here today because the generosity of three people. Yes, I have been transplanted three times. Because of my transplants, I graduated college. I also married the love of my life, Chris, 16 years ago. We were also blessed to have our son, Christopher, who is now 11.

Your support means many others who are desperately awaiting their transplant can have a chance to receive that special gift.

Audrey Stout is a Donate Life Ambassador from the Bay Area.

Sunny Luna of the California Central Valley is a CTDN volunteer and in 2009 was on the Donate Life Rose Parade float as a CTDN representative.
Just a moment to remember can make a difference

Examples of Moments of Silence

“Juan was adventurous, brave, and loving. At the age of three, he went on his first hike, with only two German Shepherds as his companions. He also loved the sea; scuba diving was one of his favorite activities. Juan loved nature and all living things. He so loved animals, he became a vegetarian at age 10. By the time he graduated high school, he finished his EMT training and volunteered in health care, and became a firefighter. Today, Juan fulfills his everlasting mission of saving lives, even of those he does not know.”

“Anne was a preschool teacher for underprivileged children. She was married to her best friend, James, for 29 years; together they had three daughters, two grandchildren, and one poodle, and were considered the best dancers in town. Her daughters’ high school friends commonly came to her for guidance and advice, even after graduation. Anne loved to laugh, cook, and take evening walks.”

Source: “Donor Moment of Silence” by Nikole Neidlinger, MD and CTDN Medical Director and Brandy Gleason, CTDN Resource Triage Coordinator, RN and BSN.

California Transplant Donor Network’s practice to honor each donor with a “Moment of Silence” in the operating room has been shown to raise hospital donation consent rates, a new CTDN research study shows.

In findings submitted for publication in “Progress in Transplantation”, the Journal of the National Organization of Transplant Professionals, CTDN concludes Moments of Silence could help answer the needs of more than 116,000 people on a national waiting list for an organ transplant.

“We propose that broader implementation of the MOS (Moments of Silence) nationwide may improve donation rates and impact the ever increasing gap between available organs and waiting recipients,” the study concludes.

For four months in 2011, CTDN examined what happened after 22 Northern California hospitals put in place a “Moment of Silence” in the operating room before surgeons began to recover a donor’s organs.

“It’s a moment during which the buzz of activity in an operating room prior to surgery stops briefly and time is taken to learn something about the person who is giving the gift of life and to thank them,” said Nikole Neidlinger, MD and CTDN Medical Director. Dr. Neidlinger is also a transplant surgeon.

For the study, she and her colleague, Resource Triage Coordinator Brandy Gleason, RN, BSN, compared the donor consent rates at the hospitals which embraced the Moment of Silence idea to 17 other hospitals that had not. After four months, they found a difference.

The number of times a family said “Yes” to donation in hospitals doing the “Moment of Silence” was higher, 76%, compared to 52% at the facilities where the practice was not used.

Dr. Neidlinger said doing Moments of Silence appears to influence the attitudes about organ and tissue donation among those who work at hospitals. Cases are referred to CTDN by hospital staff when a patient’s medical condition could make them a candidate for donation. CTDN’s trained counselors, at the appropriate time, then can begin to work with families about whether to donate.

But medical professionals, such as nurses in Intensive Care Units, invest hours or days trying to save someone’s life, CTDN’s Medical Director said. If they translate “donation” into meaning they have lost a battle to save a life, they may then perceive donation as “impersonal, invasive and organ-focused.”

That could mean fewer families willing to hear information from CTDN about donation. Stopping and honoring the donor in the operating room “improves the perception of organ donation by stressing the humanity and unique gift of the donor,” study authors conclude.

Michael Higuera, a CTDN transplant coordinator and an early advocate for the “Moment of Silence,” said simple statements about the donor can have an impact on the operating room staff.

“It can be something as simple as, ‘Jane’s family wanted you to know that she loved horses. We have recipients waiting at Stanford and California Pacific Medical Center, and we would like to take 15 seconds to recognize her gift.’ Staff has generally not been told about the personal side of the person who is donating. So hearing this brings a profound reaction.”

Since it took root at CTDN in a few hospitals in Northern California, the idea has spread and is now a practice used in every donation case. Dr. Neidlinger said, “Now staff members ask for it. They are used to having a time in the process for the moment and know it is the appropriate thing to do.”

California Transplant Donor Network (foreground) and a transplant surgeon and Brandy Gleason, RN, BSN and CTDN Resource Triage Coordinator. Their study concluded donation rates improved in hospitals that embraced the idea of a Moment of Silence.
Donation will be a part of high school health classes statewide after Governor Jerry Brown signed Assembly Bill 1967 in September.

“Do you wish to register as an organ and tissue donor?” is asked of anyone signing up for a driver license at the DMV. To prepare the state’s newest potential drivers with information about the issue, Assembly Bill 1967 was introduced by Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez.

While CTDN already provides presentations to schools which want them, the new bill requires organ and tissue donation information will be included in health classes statewide the next time the curriculum framework is revised.

“The state support for organ and tissue donation’s role in saving lives is an important milestone. Educating high school students as they prepare to make the critical decision of whether to register as a donor is a great first step. We now hope once they are informed, students will help in educating their parents and grandparents about the gift of life through donation,” said Cindy Siljestrom, Chief Executive Officer for the California Transplant Donor Network.

CTDN has been active for years in encouraging individual high schools as well as school districts to allow voluntary presentations on organ and tissue donation. As a result, thousands of high school students have heard CTDN staff as well as people touched by donation describe the lifesaving impact of registering as a donor.

“It is a tragedy that nearly one third of individuals currently on the waiting list will fail to receive their transplant in time. I am hopeful that this bill will save more lives,” said Speaker Pérez.

CTDN Community Development Liaison Ayanna Anderson answers questions about organ and tissue donation at Balboa High School in San Francisco. CTDN has made presentations at high schools throughout Northern California and Northern Nevada. Recent legislation signed by California Gov. Brown will require organ and tissue donation discussion be a part of health classes in high schools throughout California.
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