

## The Gift That Keeps on Giving

Everyday, about 77 people receive the organ transplant that will save their lives. Unfortunately, 19 people everyday will die waiting to receive an organ. It sounds so simple though, you die, and you let someone else live. Why does this seem to be such a problem for some people? The answer is simple. Myths and rumors have influenced a person's decision before they even know what organ donation is really like or how it all works.

The biggest myth I must bust is the one that says a doctor or paramedic will let you die just to steal your organs. This is wrong on so many different levels! First of all think about it, what value does your organs have to do for the doctor? A doctor's first priority is his patients and saving their lives. Even so, it takes many doctors to determine the death and cause of; there is no way he could get away with that. Do you actually think that the family of the deceased person is going to say, "It's okay doctor, and you'll get it right the next time"? Ha!

The image people may conceive is that when a person dies the doctor automatically starts ripping away at your organs, which is a total myth! When the donor passes away, the doctor in charge must immediately contact the transplant coordinator who then takes over. The doctor never even involved! The transplant coordinator will go talk to the potential organ donor's family about donating. The event is timed carefully so that the family has time to understand everything fully. Once consent is formed, the transplant coordinator will then determine whether it is safe to begin the transplant process. If the death **could** be under jurisdiction, a medical examiner or coroner will be called to come over and investigate the body (that's for all you that think doctors want people dead!). Then, the transplant coordinator will be in the room during the surgery, where a separate transplant team does the surgery and makes sure that everything goes well and that the procedure is legit. The doctor is never even involved after death!

You can even have an open casket when you donate organs! The procedure is done just as carefully as a regular operation would, stitching and carefully keeping everything looking the same. You even get to choose what kind of things you would like to donate. If you sign up as an organ donor, you will be automatically up for your organs after death, but if you so wished you could donate some of the newer kinds of transplants, like a facial or eye transplant. But the thing to remember is that they will not take these kinds of organs unless you specifically permit them to do so.

Organ donation is not the big scary chopping block that some think that it is. For many, organ donation is a blessing and the greatest gift you could ever give another living being. Think about it, if you were the one waiting for an organ; wouldn't you appreciate that gift more than anything else in the world? You can donate anywhere from a few months old to even your 70's if you qualify! With your organ donor card you can save up to eight people's lives! Talk about the greatest gift you will ever give someone.

Here's some food for thought next time you think that an organ donation is just "not for you." Steve Ferkau has had cystic fibrosis since a young age and was not supposed to live past his teen years. He has been fighting his disease for over 40 years and barely hanging on. He couldn't even walk down the hallway. Then, in 2000, a 17-year-old girl from Iowa named Kari died from an aneurysm near her brain the day before her prom. In the month before she died, she told her parents of her organ donation wish and they had decided to keep her wish. Ferkau received her lungs and since then has been an entirely new person. He lives in the memory of Kari and does not let a day go by without telling someone about her. Since Kari has saved his life, he joined the "Hustle Up the Hancock," and has formed a team in her memory, called Kari's Klimbers, where he tells runners and volunteers the story of Kari and how she saved his life. He has also raised over \$135,000 for Lung Disease Research, and continues to promote a cure for lung diseases and to promote organ donation.

Kari has saved his life and in doing so has helped the many people that Ferkau has since then inspired and raised money for. What if she had never done that? What if she had gone to her grave with all of her useful organs? This wonderful person Steve would never have been given the opportunity to help change the world.

“I’m doing so much I’d never imagined, with the lungs from a beautiful girl whose smile I can see when I close my eyes,” as quoted by Steve Ferkau.