

Media Release

THE MOST MEANINGFUL GIFT THIS HOLIDAY SEASON IS THE GIFT OF LIFE

Register your decision to donate and talk to your family about your organ and tissue donation decision

December 19, 2008 – Toronto, ON - Trillium Gift of Life Network (TGLN) is celebrating the holiday season by reminding Ontarians how important it is to register their decision to donate and talk to their family about their decision.

“This holiday season as you are sharing this joyous time with your loved ones, please take a minute to talk to your family about your organ and tissue donation wishes,” said Frank Markel, President and CEO of TGLN. “Your decision could be the most meaningful gift of the holidays – one that could save up to eight lives and enhance as many as 75 others.”

Today in Ontario, 1708 patients are waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant. Of those, 1071 are men, 611 are women and 26 are children. They are living on hope of a gift from others who have made the critical decision that Derek Restoule’s family did. Derek was born on Christmas Day in 1992. Two years ago at the age of 14, Derek succumbed to head injuries, as a result of a bicycle accident. He went on to save five lives through organ donation.

“Donation has helped my family and me to know how special my son Derek is and to know that he touched so many people lives,” said Lisa Restoule of North Bay. “Christmas is a time to celebrate. We celebrate Derek’s birthday as he would be 16-years-old on December 25. We also celebrate the families who are together because of Derek. We celebrate, we cry, and we smile. Derek is forever smiling.”

Organs like hearts, livers, kidneys, pancreas, lungs and small bowels can be donated. Donations of tissues like corneas, heart valves, bone and skin also have life altering impacts.

Imagine loving to sew, but not being able to thread a needle because your sight is failing. That is what happened to Maria Antonacci, of Toronto; her eyes gave up on her before she gave up on them. Antonacci needed new corneas.

“I like to sew and I was having trouble threading a needle one day. That’s when I knew I was in serious trouble,” Antonacci said. “I was slowly going blind. My eyesight was restricted to only a few feet away. It was a strain to read and watch television. I had difficulty seeing at a distance and basically relied on my husband, Vito, to guide me at times. I would never venture alone in a new place without help.”

Antonacci received her first transplant, her right eye, in October 2006 and her second transplant, her left eye, in November 2007. Receiving her transplants not only gave Antonacci her sight back, but also her independence.

Ontario performs approximately 1,000 cornea transplants each year, but many more are needed.

“This holiday season give the most gracious gift of all, life. Too many of our mothers, our fathers and our children die while waiting for their lifesaving or life-enhancing transplant; it doesn’t have to be this way. We can all make a difference. The most important way to make a difference is to register your consent and to share your decision with your family,” said Markel.

You can register your donation decision by visiting your local Health Card Services – OHIP office where you renew your health card or, you can go to the Trillium Gift of Life Network website www.giftoflife.on.ca and download a Gift of Life Consent Form, fill it out and mail it in to the address on the form.

For more details on Trillium Gift of Life Network please visit our website at www.giftoflife.on.ca or call 416-363-4001 or toll free 1-800-263-2833.

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