

Do you have comments or suggestions?

We want to hear from you! Please contact us if you have ideas for *Weaving Lives Together* newsletter articles, photos or other information that would be helpful to donor families. Contact us by:

- Phone** (877) 612-4287
- E-mail** psymons@rtix.com
- Mail** Paula Symons, Newsletter Editor,
6502 Odana Road, Madison, WI 53719
- Visit us** www.rtidonorservices.org

If you would like to be removed from the RTI Donor Services mailing list, please contact us by phone, e-mail, regular mail, or through the Web site, and provide your name and address.

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...through a special magnet! Let your community know you support donation by displaying a magnet depicting the green ribbon, the universal symbol for donation awareness. Magnets are perfect for cars, refrigerators and filing cabinets to share the "Support Donation" message. You may order a free magnet by contacting us through the phone, e-mail, regular mail or Web site information provided above. Leave your name and address, in addition to the amount of magnets you'd like, with a limit of five magnets per order. You'll receive your order within two weeks.



RTI Donor Services
6502 Odana Road
Madison, Wis. 53719
(877) 612-4287
www.rtidonorservices.org

Weaving Lives Together is produced three times a year by RTI Donor Services to provide information on its tissue banks and their activities.

RTI Donor Services is a network of tissue recovery agencies that offers families the option of tissue donation and supports their wishes, while serving as responsible stewards of human donated tissue gifts. The not-for-profit organization provides donation awareness education and support to local communities in Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Montana, New York and Wisconsin.

During 2004, RTI Donor Services tissue banks offered the tissue donation option to more than 10,000 families.

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Weaving Lives together

A quarterly newsletter from RTI Donor Services

Recipient Back in the Game Following Transplant

By Rita Zeidner

In 2002, I was limping along, recovering at a glacial pace from reconstructive knee surgery after falling, hard, on an icy back country ski trail near Breckenridge, Colo.

Today, three years after the surgery I needed to put my knee back together, I'm back to my old self. As I see it, I owe a big, well, "part" of my recovery to Bob Jones, a man I never had the privilege of knowing but learned about while researching an article on knee injuries for the *Washington Post*. But more about Bob later.

I had torn my anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), an injury that was making it into the sports pages with alarming frequency. The most important of the knee's four ligaments, the ACL plays a key role in keeping the knee stable, especially during sports. But when the knee is subjected to a forceful twist, as often happens during fast-action sports like basketball or football, the ACL can tear or snap.

During my first of many visits to the orthopedist, I was devastated to hear that a damaged ACL doesn't heal. But my spirits improved when I learned that many injured athletes had returned to their sport after having new tissues transplanted in their damaged knees. I felt even better when I heard that more than 80 percent of the more than 50,000 ACL replacements performed in the U.S. each year are successful.

But wait. Did somebody say "transplant"?

My doctor offered me two recovery options. He said he could dig around in my leg for uninjured tissue, reshape it into a new ligament and stitch the rebuilt part into my bad knee. Or he could perform a similar procedure using what's called "allograft" tissue recovered from a deceased person. For the same result, the latter option would be less painful and result in a shorter recovery.

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Rita Zeidner has been able to resume biking and other athletic activities after transplant surgery that replaced her damaged anterior cruciate ligament with one donated by Bob Jones of Dixon Ill. His wife Kathy and daughters hold his photo.

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ACL Recipient continued from page 1

Given the alternatives, I made what seemed the more rational decision to receive an ACL from somebody who didn't need it anymore.

With no contrary information to go by, I assumed that my donor would be a woman. But who was she and where was she from? What were the circumstances leading to her death? How old were these parts now in my care? Who was her favorite Beatle?

As it turns out, the donor I envisioned as female was a guy, I learned from RTI Donor Services in Madison, Wis., the agency that recovered Bob's tissues. Bob's life had come to an end in the early hours of Jan. 1, 2002. He and his wife, Kathy, had spent New Year's Eve with their daughter and were driving back to their home in Dixon, Ill. when a drunk driver rear-ended their car at full speed.

Kathy, who already had lost a brother to a drunk driver several years earlier, spent the first few days of 2002 dealing with her own critical injuries and hoping for a miracle that would shake Bob, 54, from his coma. But after about a week, she agreed to take him off life

support and authorized the recovery of any tissues that might help others.

"Why put [Bob's remains] in the ground when there are people here who are suffering," Kathy, who was 41 at the time of the accident, would tell me later. I was particularly touched when Kathy mentioned that knowing Bob's ACL had gone to help me, personally, had helped her come to terms with her husband's death. "At least something good could come out of this," she said.

If the process of getting my bum knee working again seemed painful and slow, that's because it was. However, I can only imagine how much more difficult my recovery would have been if my doctor had to perform the reconstruction using my own tissue.

Three years after my accident and the fear that I'd never be able to return to my old activities, me and my knee are doing great.

Bob, here's to you. ❤️

Rita Zeidner is an Arlington, Va.-based freelance writer.

Do you know? The Facts About Bone



- The strongest bone in the body is the thighbone, or femur. Ounce for ounce, it has a greater pressure tolerance and bearing strength than a rod of equal size in cast steel. It is also the biggest bone, comprising one-quarter of the body's height.
- The smallest bone is the ear, equivalent to half the size of a grain of rice.
- The hardest bone is the jawbone.
- The "funny bone" isn't a bone at all. It's the place where a nerve crosses the surface of the long bone near your elbow, a bone known as the "humerus".
- The human neck has the same number of vertebrae as a giraffe.
- The skeleton of an average 160-pound body weighs about 29 pounds.
- Donated bone is used for facial reconstruction, limb salvage, correction of birth defects, cancer treatments, hip joint replacement, fracture repair, spinal and oral surgeries.
- Bone transplants work to eliminate or reduce pain, promote faster healing and increase mobility and strength for patients.

Sources: Regeneration Technologies, Inc.; National Institutes of Health.

'Ripples of Hope' Quilt Honors Brothers-in-Law

Bob Quirk and Bob Ruditys had more in common than their first names.

Bob Quirk of Neshkoro, Wis., was married to Bob Ruditys' sister **Marlene**. The Quirks, along with Bob Ruditys and his wife **Sandra**, did a lot together, with both Bobs enjoying a special friendship. "They were very close," Marlene remembers.

When St. Francis, Wis. resident Bob Ruditys died in August of 2001, his wife Sandra consented to donation of his tissues, although their previous discussions about donation were vague. "I never got a straight answer from my husband," says Sandra. "He didn't think anyone could use his parts."

Less than five months later when Bob Quirk died, Marlene was faced with the same decision, but she knew what to do. "When my brother was a donor, my Bob thought it was a great idea," she says. "We hadn't talked about it before then."

Although heart disease claimed both their lives, the brothers-in-law continue to be close. Quilt squares in their honor appear on "Ripples of Hope," one of RTI Donor Services' memorial quilts honoring tissue and eye donors. Marlene and Sandra read about the quilt in a newsletter article and decided to create squares to appear in the same quilt. They attended the quilt's unveiling ceremony last December.

Married for 49 years, the Quirks had four children, followed by 10 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. They retired in 1997 to Neshkoro, where they were active in several organizations and regularly played golf.

Bob and Sandra Ruditys, who were childhood sweethearts, had four children, six grandchildren and a great-grandchild, born four months after Bob's death. Sandra describes him as a very outgoing person who enjoyed their home in the Wisconsin Northwoods.

The sisters-in-law are happy with their decisions to donate. Marlene shares tissue donation information with anyone interested and is especially happy that two brothers-in-law who were such good friends can remain close through their places of honor on the quilt.

"They were so close in life," Sandra says. "It really means a lot. They're probably both looking down and are very pleased." ❤️



Sandra Ruditys, left, and Marlene Quirk view the "Ripples of Hope" Memorial Donor Family Quilt. Their husbands—who were tissue donors and brothers-in-law—are among the 21 donors honored on the quilt.

Honor Your Loved One

Would you like to honor your loved one as part of the RTI Donor Services Memorial Donor Family Quilt Program? Families in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan who would like detailed information on submitting a quilt square for this on-going program, may call the RTI Donor Services office in Madison, Wis., at (608) 231-9050, or toll-free, (877) 612-4287.

'The Last Gift You Give...'

As a Catholic Church deacon, Brooklyn, N.Y. resident **William Wander** counseled many families during significant chapters in their lives. He especially encouraged people to give careful thought to their family members' wishes, and often commented that "the last gift you give to a loved one who dies, is what *they* want."

When 82-year-old William died last November, his wife **Patricia** gave him a final gift, consenting to donation of his bones and skin to improve the lives of others.

"He gave blood until he was 81," she says, adding that he almost discarded his donor card, thinking that he was too old to be eligible for anything else. Their doctor—who donated his own parents' tissue—informed the Wanders that age isn't the first consideration in tissue donation and "to keep his donor card in his wallet."

He did.

Shortly afterward, William died of a heart attack three days after major surgery. Although he had not brought his wallet, with his donor card inside, to the hospital, Patricia knew his wishes and authorized the donation.



Shown here last spring with his wife Patricia, William Wander became a tissue donor following his death in November 2004.

Because of their donation experience, she notes that her daughter agreed to donation after her husband's recent death.

A life-long Brooklyn resident, William served in the Marine Corps, attended school at night for six years to complete his college degree, and worked 43 years for the Exxon Mobil Corp. "He always had to have something to do, and he always had to have a plan for the next day," Patricia remembers. After retirement, he completed training to become a deacon. The Wanders also volunteered at Lutheran Medical Center in Brooklyn, where Patricia still gives her time staffing the information desk.

Residents of the cooperative apartment building where Patricia lives have asked a lot of questions about donation, she says. She has been providing tissue donation brochures for interested neighbors, mostly those who "are older and feel they're too old to donate."

Patricia says the donation experience has been positive and meaningful.

"Because of the donation, I feel Bill is still alive, helping others." 🍷

Quilt Program Invites Participation

The on-going Memorial Donor Family Quilt Program is in need of squares from donor families wishing to honor their loved ones. Families in New York may receive detailed information by calling RTI Donor Services office at (718) 273-6806 or toll-free (877) 612-4287.



Donor family members Deborah Quick, left, of Staten Island, N.Y., and her sister Mary Palmer of Somerset, N.J., help with float decorating. Two of 23 people from across the country who rode the float in memory of their loved ones during the Tournament of Roses parade New Year's Day, Deborah and Mary honored their siblings Nancy Quick and David Alleyne.

'She Was My Best Friend. I Miss Her Terribly.'

It wasn't unusual for Atlanta resident **Ellen Talley** to arrive at family holiday functions sporting a pair of reindeer antlers, or to share her opinions on current events. She knew how to tell a joke, plan a party and make things happen instead of waiting for them to come to her.

"I just enjoyed her company," says **Imogene Goode**, Ellen's sister. "She was my best friend. I miss her terribly."

But Imogene's energetic sister—who died at the age of 61—is living on through the gifts of tissue and eyes donated after her death. "It was a good option for someone who was always willing to help other people," she says. "She was a very giving person."

Imogene and another sister, **Mary**, made the donation decision, knowing that at one time, Ellen was interested in donating her body to science. They were not aware of tissue donation. "We made the best decision we could and we're happy with it," Imogene says. "Ellen's donation helped 32 people. I know that would have made her happy."

In life, there was a lot that made Ellen happy.

An employee of Delta Airlines for 30 years, she "loved working for the company," Imogene notes. Family was also important. "She made my grandchildren—each and every one of them—feel special."

Ellen's memory is being honored with those of 12 other tissue donors in the "Leaves of Life" donor family quilt, a commemorative program that invites donor families to craft quilt squares recognizing their loved ones. Imogene and Mary were present at the event that unveiled the quilt, and attended

several other family events sponsored by RTI Donor Services.

The quilt square depicts Ellen and her beloved dog, Moose. "She took that dog everywhere," says Imogene, until Moose's death in 2000.

Imogene would like more people to be aware of tissue donation. She has arranged several presentations with RTI Donor Services staff, including one for the "No Bridge Bridge Club," an organization Ellen formed, and a church group to which Ellen belonged.

Imogene plans to help spread the donation message by borrowing the quilt for display at family events. 🍷



Ellen Talley, a tissue and eye donor, loved her family and her long-time companion "Moose."

You Can Help Weave Lives Together...

...by participating in the RTI Donor Services Memorial Donor Family Quilt Program. For details on how Georgia families can create a quilt square in honor of their loved ones, call the RTI Donor Services office at (678) 279-4002 or toll-free, (877) 612-4287.

Gift of Life Can Be Given at Any Age

Geraldine Thompsen was making funeral arrangements for her husband **Ken** at the Adair Funeral Home in Tucson, when she was asked a surprising question. Would she consider donating the tissues of her 81-year-old husband?

Although Geraldine had never heard of tissue donation, she consented after learning how tissue transplantation helps increase strength, mobility and independence for thousands of people each year. She was especially surprised that an elderly person could be a donor.

She is confident that Ken would have approved. "He certainly was a caring and loving man and enjoyed fellowship with others," says Geraldine.

A part-time Lutheran minister, Ken taught for several years in the Midwest and Alaska before developing asthma. His doctor suggested he move to Arizona. Geraldine met him in Nogales, Ariz., where he worked as a minister and substitute teacher. After they married, they spent 17 years in Nogales, taking short-term ministry assignments in Mexico. They retired to Green Valley, Ariz. in 1996.

Geraldine is enthusiastic about tissue donation and the opportunities that exist for

elderly donors, and hopes her own tissue donation will be possible. She has informed her family about her wishes, handing out tissue donation brochures and other information. "I've shared this information with my widow friends," she says. "I'm all for it and I'm willing to share the word."

She has also created a quilt square in Ken's honor for placement on a special memorial donor family quilt sponsored by RTI Donor Services.



Geraldine Thompsen, right, attends a Celebrate Life family memorial ceremony in Tucson, bringing a photo of her husband, tissue donor Kenneth Thompsen. Also pictured is Dan Lunn and Laurie Cuddy of RTI Donor Services.

Age No Barrier to Donation

- A person's general health and physical condition are the factors determining donor suitability, not arbitrary criteria such as age.
- People 65 and older comprise the largest single group of tissue transplant recipients.
- Bone tissue is frequently used in hip and knee replacement surgeries.
- Sixty-seven percent of the 300,000 Americans who undergo hip replacement surgery each year, are 65 and older. Of the 250,000 people who have total knee replacement surgery each year, 72 percent are in the same age group.
- If osteoporosis is not present, bone strength does not degrade as a person ages.

Join in a Labor of Love

Arizona families are invited to participate in the Memorial Donor Family Quilt Program sponsored by RTI Donor Services. For detailed instructions, call the RTI Donor Services office in Tempe, Ariz., at (602) 347-0118 or toll-free at (877) 612-4287.

It is so healing for those of us who have lost a loved one to keep his/her name alive by taking part in the projects and ceremonies your office provides. Your work is truly a healing balm to those of us who grieve. And for that and all you do, I thank you sincerely.

—*Sylvia Camp
Perry, Ga.*

Thank you for all your help and consideration. The gift that we gave [RTI] Donor Services was one of our most precious possessions, but it was a personality that had to be shared. I'm glad that we were contacted and that we were able to participate.

—*Marlene C. Michaels
Lillian, Ala.*

Thank you for including me in the Stepping Stones of Hope event. It was my official "coming out," the first public participation since my husband's death. Only because I had committed, did I follow through—and I am thankful I did. Thanks again for being there for us.

—*Elaine Maule
Scottsdale, Ariz.*

Your newsletter brings me peace in my heart. I believe it's an on-going honor and tribute to our loved ones. The second anniversary of my mother's death is approaching and your newsletter gives me pride in her contribution. I feel connected.

—*S. Bush
Monona, Wis.*

Recognition Ceremony Set for Summer

Donor families from across the United States are being honored during a special recognition event set for July 22–24. The Donor Recognition Workshop & Ceremony will be held at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington D.C. and is being sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services and the transplantation community. Workshops will be

conducted on Saturday, followed by the Donor Recognition Ceremony on Sunday.

For information on how to participate, contact Joy Demas in the Division of Transplantation at (301) 443-7577, e-mail at jdemas@hrsa.gov or visit the www.organdonor.gov Web site.

In Memory of Your Loved One

While RTI Donor Services is honored that families are interested in making a monetary contribution to the organization, these donations cannot be accepted. Please consider the following list of donation-related organizations that are structured to receive monetary gifts:

National Donor Family Council
(A division of the National Kidney Foundation)
Provides resources and programs for donor families
30 E. 33rd St.
New York, NY 10016
(800) 622-9010
www.kidney.org

National Coalition on Donation
Alliance of donation-related organizations that inspire people to donate life
700 N. 4th St.
Richmond, VA 23219 (con't)

(804) 782-4920
www.shareyourlife.org

James Redford Institute for Transplant Awareness

Provides donation education and outreach through films and the World Wide Web
10573 W. Pico Blvd. #214
Los Angeles, CA 90064-2348
(310) 559-6325
www.jrifilms.org

Transplant Recipients International Organization (TRIO)

Works to improve quality of life for transplant candidates, recipients, donors and families
2100 M St. NW #170-353
Washington, D.C. 20037-1233
(800) TRIO-386
www.trioweb.org

Calendar of Events

March, 2005
National Eye Donor Month

April, 2005
National Donate Life Month

April 22, 2005
"Ripples of Hope" donor family event
Green Bay, Wis.

July 22–24, 2005
National Donor Recognition Ceremony and Workshop
Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington D.C.