

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) 663-4437 or (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.

Show your support for donation...

...with a fun and trendy way to get your message across! This special Donate Life dog tag-style necklace comes with a silver ball chain. You may order dog tags—with a limit of five per donor family—through the phone, e-mail, regular mail or Web site information listed above. Provide your name and address, in addition to the amount of items you'd like. You'll receive your order within two weeks.



RTI Donor Services
6502 Odana Road
Madison, Wis. 53719
(877) 663-4437 or
(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, Michigan, New York and Wisconsin.

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Weaving Lives together

A newsletter from RTI Donor Services

RTI Donor Services Among 2007 Rose Parade Float Sponsors

For the fourth straight year, RTI Donor Services will help sponsor a New Year's Day floral tribute to organ and tissue donor families, transplant recipients, living donors and their loved ones.

RTI Donor Services is one of 35 national sponsors of the Donate Life Rose Parade Float, making its fourth appearance in the 118th Tournament of Roses Parade. In the spirit of the 2007 Rose Parade, "Our Good Nature," the Donate Life float will carry the theme "Giving From The Heart" and will feature 22 riders representing the generous people who make possible organ and tissue donation and transplantation. (See Page 5 to meet the RTI Donor Services-sponsored float rider.)

The 2007 parade will take place at 8 a.m. Pacific Standard Time Monday, Jan. 1. ♥



"Giving From The Heart" is the theme of the Donate Life Rose Parade Float, which includes the Family Circle Garden, located at the front.

Join the Family Circle!

Donor family members have an opportunity to decorate a small part of the 2007 Rose Parade Donate Life Float, and they don't have to travel to Pasadena to do it.

Families who have been touched by donation are invited to be part of "Family Circle," a program that allows them to personally participate in the float and the Rose Parade experience. RTI Donor Services and 2004 float rider Kari Barlament will provide Family Circle dedication packages at no charge to 28 donor families.

Those selected will receive:

- A rose with the name of their loved one placed in the Family Circle

garden, located at the front of the float;

- A duplicate rose, a personalized certificate recognizing their loved one's gift;
- Two gold Donate Life lapel pins;
- Two Family Circle lapel pins.

Interested families are asked to submit a dedication in 100 words or less. From the dedications received, Kari will select 28 for Family Circle sponsorship. Please see the form, "Be Part of the Rose Parade Family Circle Garden", on Page 2 for complete details.

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Join The Family Circle continued from page 1

Be Part of the Rose Parade Family Circle Garden!

Your name _____

Donor name _____

Donor's city of residence _____

Your city of residence _____

Dedication (In 100 words or less, why you would like to honor your loved one with a rose placed in the Donate Life Float Family Circle Garden)

You may submit your dedication by completing the form and sending it to: RTI Donor Services, 6502 Odana Road, Madison, WI 53719, or send the information via e-mail to psymons@rtix.com. Dedications—28 of which will be selected by Family Circle Committee Member Kari Barlament—must be received no later than Friday, Sept. 1. ❤️

Do you know?

The Facts About Bone



- The strongest bone in the body is the thigh bone, 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 in 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.



Tree of Honor Blossoms

More than 150 donor family members celebrated National Donate Life Month by visiting a special memorial at RTI Donor Services' Madison, Wis. office.

Commemorating Wisconsin, Illinois and Michigan tissue donors, the Tree of Honor memorial is a 27-by-8-foot wall mural depicting a tree with sweeping branches adorned with 340 framed photos. Families submitted these photos to recognize their loved ones who donated bone, skin, heart valves, veins and connective tissues to save and enhance the lives of others.

The Tree of Honor was officially unveiled during a two-week period of open house events held during April. Visitors viewed photos on the tree, and had a chance to see a video presentation, set to music, of all Tree of Honor donors. Donor family quilts were also on display, along with information on how families can become involved in the quilt program.

RTI Donor Services Division Manager Jeanette Potts is pleased with the overwhelming response to the Tree of Honor. "Our organization does as much as possible to recognize our generous donors and their families," she says. "We're very happy that families have enthusiastically embraced this unique way of honoring their loved ones."

Be Part of a Growing Program

Photos can be accepted at any time for the Tree of Honor, the on-going memorial to Wisconsin, Illinois and Michigan tissue donors. Photos sent in regular mail to RTI Donor Services, 6502 Odana Road, Madison, WI 53719, should be wallet sized with the donor's name on the back. Electronic images should be sent to: psymons@rtix.com. Photo authorization forms will be sent to all Tree of Honor participants giving RTI Donor Services permission to use donor photos in this project. Photos cannot be returned. For further information, contact (877) 663-4437 or call the Donor Services office at (608) 231-9050. ❤️



Above: Mary Schuck and Kathy Rutherford discovered they had something in common—tattoos in memory of their tissue donor sons. Kathy served as a donor family Ambassador during the Tree of Honor open house events.



Left: From left, Beth, Faith and Kevin Bailes point out their special photo of tissue donor Joshua Maroney.

New York Donor Families Celebrate Life

Sharing memories and their tissue donation experiences, 50 donor family members gathered during National Donate Life Month for a “Celebrate Life” event sponsored by RTI Donor Services. The brunch event was held at LiGreci’s Staaten Restaurant in Staten Island.

Donor family members brought photos of their loved ones, lit candles to place by the photos, then shared stories about how their loved ones lived, how they made a difference, and how much they are missed. Candles, in half-circle shapes, symbolized families’ memories and hopes for their loved ones; the missing halves depicted the fact that donors are now part of someone else and may have saved, enhanced or improved lives.

Family members also had the opportunity to view the New York Memorial Donor Quilt. Families of eight donors participated in the quilt project. In addition, all families were presented with medals recognizing their generous decision to donate.



Family members hold photos of donors David Alleyne and Nancy Quick.

RTI Donor Services Division Manager Joe Licata told participants he was pleased to see so many donor families in attendance in memory of the special people who gave the gift of life. “Because of the love and respect you have for your loved ones, and the courageous decisions you made, they will live on through their gifts of bone, skin, heart valves and veins. These gifts have improved strength, mobility and independence for many, many people,” he said. “On behalf of those whose lives have been saved and enhanced, we thank you.”



RTI Division Manager Joe Licata and Donor Family Communication Manager Paula Symons watch Anthony Gordon light a candle in memory of his brother Christopher Martinez.



The Jefferson family attended in honor of donor Tralane Walker.

Georgia Woman to Honor Daughter in 2007 Rose Parade

Susan Giess knows her daughter Amanda was special, both in life and after her death.

Caring and compassionate, 22-year-old “Mandy” had many friends and a keen interest in helping others, especially the homeless. The Giess home accommodated Mandy’s menagerie of dogs, cats, birds, rats, lizards, fish and even a spider. “If there was an abandoned animal, she found it,” says Susan.

Mandy’s short life ended in August 2003, following a motor vehicle accident near her home in Palmetto, Ga., a community south of Atlanta. Susan was aware of her daughter’s wishes to be a donor. When the request was made to donate Mandy’s tissues, Susan readily agreed.

Three years later, Susan will celebrate her donation decision by being one of 22 riders on “Giving from the Heart,” the 2007 Donate Life float being featured for the fourth year in the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena. She is the first-ever Donate Life float rider from Georgia.

A former California resident, Susan remembers going to the parade as a little girl. One year, well-known parade participant the Lone Ranger hoisted her up on his horse Trigger during a pause in the festivities.

Susan is happy to be returning to Pasadena to honor her daughter who, through tissue donation, is still improving lives.

Mandy’s interest in helping others in need began the year before she died. One day, she called her mother at work with an idea—to provide homeless people with food, apparel and personal items during the holiday season.

The idea spawned “Stockings for Love.” The first year, Susan and Mandy set aside \$20 each pay day to buy toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, bandages, cough drops, fruit, cookies, hats and gloves. Items were distributed in holiday stockings to 12 homeless people who frequented an Atlanta shopping area.

The experience moved Mandy to tears, telling Susan, “Mom, I did this to help them, but I think it did as much for me as it did them.”

“It made me feel good she wanted to do this herself,” says Susan, who decided the fledgling program had to continue after Mandy died. “I’m very proud of the way she turned out and how she cared about other people.”

Susan championed another Stockings for Love effort in 2004 with the help of RTI Donor Services. Because there were so many more items, they were distributed in boxes, all decorated with stockings on top.

Susan remains passionate about the Stockings for Love program, and also about donation. She feels good about her decision, and points out it has been an opportunity to learn more about tissue donation and transplantation.

She has enthusiastically shared donation information with members of her church, as well as colleagues at Paychex, a payroll service company where she’s worked for 12 years.

Susan is especially pleased that more than 40 recipients in 11 states benefited from her daughter’s gift.

“Mandy would have liked that.”



Amanda Giess



Susan Giess

Donor Families Tell Their Stories

My name is Tammy. This is about my mother, Mickie Kay Park.

My mom was diagnosed with Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, a form of muscular dystrophy, when she was a little girl. They said by the time she was 30, she'd be in a wheelchair. She proved them wrong.

My mom was a strong woman. She raised my son until the day she died on August 26, 2003. My son was 15 when she passed.

She was a great lady. What took her life was lung cancer. She found out she had cancer, completed her treatments and lived for eight more long years. When she was in the hospital, she knew it was time to go. So she came home and passed away the next morning.

We donated her tissues to RTI Donor Services. They are a bunch of wonderful people to talk to. Thanks, RTI Donor Services. God bless you all.

—Tammy Rodriguez, Phoenix, Ariz.

When my father was nearing death at age 87 in Northwestern Wisconsin almost four years ago, I was approached by one of the nurses asking if we would consider donating tissue to help others. My sister and I had thought he was too old and thin. After all, wasn't everything worn out?

Knowing that Dad had lived a quiet life helping and befriending all he met, we knew what he would say. I cannot tell you how pleased we were to learn that enough skin, bone and connective tissue was recovered to help 60 people. My sister and I know that Ellsworth Charles Soltwisch—Dad to us—



Mickie Kay Park

would have been proud of his kids for making the decision to help so many other people.

I wish I could do the same, but as a 20-year cancer survivor, I remain exempt from donation. But while I am still here, I can spread the word to others about this wonderful final gift they can make for themselves or their kin.

—E. Grant Soltwisch, Ladysmith, Wis.

I want to tell you a little about my mom. She was a very giving person, not just of herself, but of her time, too. She was always willing to help others whenever needed. She would make meals for neighbors and family members who were sick or to help out when they moved.

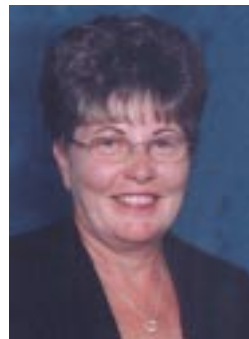
She even took care of the firefighters when our neighbor's house was lost to a fire. She would help all of her children by cleaning their house, cooking a meal, doing laundry, or watching her grandchildren.

For me, it was a little different. I was diagnosed with auto-immune hepatitis when I was 11. Even though my mom worked, she still was able to make sure I got to every doctor appointment I needed. I was always tired and did not have a lot of energy, but Mom made sure I went to school. I was on medication until I was 17, when my only hope was a liver transplant. I was placed on the list and I only had to wait two weeks until I received a new healthy liver.

It has been almost 12 years for me, and my mom was there through every complication.

This past New Year's Eve, I lost my mom to a massive heart attack. Even though she is gone, a part of her still lives on. My mom was able to donate her corneas, tissue and bones. It is wonderful to know that in life and in death, she was able to help others. I feel so blessed to have had her in my life and it gives me comfort knowing that the person who gave me life was also someone who could give others a second chance at life.

—Greta Melcher, Watertown, Wis.



Kathy Melcher

RTI Celebrates National Donate Life Month



Employees at Regeneration Technologies Inc. (RTI), take time during National Donate Life Month to form a living green ribbon symbolizing donation and send a message of thanks to tissue donors and their families. Throughout April, employees took part in a series of events designed to increase awareness about organ and tissue donation, including an education session with a recovery organization in Florida, where RTI is located. RTI Donor Services is an affiliate of RTI, a leading processor of human tissue shaped into implants for orthopedic, sports medicine, cardiovascular, urological and other surgeries.

Minority Awareness in Spotlight August 1

National Minority Donor Awareness Day is observed every August 1 to increase awareness of donation among African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Alaskan Native, Pacific Islander and Native American populations. The day also recognizes minority donors and their families.

Organ procurement organizations and tissue recovery agencies across the country focus special efforts to reach minority populations to promote donation and answer questions and concerns. Efforts include public service campaigns designed especially

for Latinos and African Americans that promote donation and dispel myths.

National Minority Donor Awareness Day originated with the Minority Organ and Tissue Transplant Education Program (MOTTEP) at Howard University in Washington, D.C. The event was first recognized in 1996 by President Clinton.

For more information about Minority Donor Awareness Day, visit www.nationalmottep.org.

November Brings Two Donation Observances

Two observances planned for November are designed to bring donation awareness to life:

National Donor Sabbath, November 10–12.

This Friday through Sunday observance is when members of faith communities focus on gifts passed to others through organ, tissue, bone marrow and blood donation. Many faith leaders will officiate at services and during programs to increase awareness of donation and transplantation and the critical need for donors.

Most religions in the United States either officially support donation or support the individual

choices of their members. Donation is viewed as an act of compassion and generosity.

ThanksGiving Day—Give Thanks. Give Life.

On Thanksgiving Day, November 23, Americans gather together to give thanks. The ThanksGiving Day—Give Thanks. Give Life. program encourages everyone to spend a few minutes talking to family members about the importance of giving life through donation.

This could take the form of a Thanksgiving dinner conversation, or discussion any time during November.

