

Writing to the Family of Your Donor

Writing to Donor Families

As a transplant recipient you may wish to communicate with your donor's family. The decision to write to the donor family is a very personal one.

Sometimes, transplant recipients and their families choose to write to donor families to express their gratitude. We know that donor families welcome and appreciate this. When you acknowledge the donor family's loss and express your thanks, you make their loved one's gift meaningful and offer the family some comfort.

As the region's non-profit organ and tissue donor program, Tennessee Donor Services encourages recipients and their families to write to donor families and facilitates the delivery of all letters and correspondence between transplant recipients and donor families.

If you would like to write to the donor family, consider sending a hand written or typed letter or a greeting card. In this brochure are some guidelines for writing to your donor's family.

Writing About Yourself

- Include your *first* name only (*and the first names of your family members if you choose to include them*).
- Acknowledge the donor family's loss and thank them for their gift.
- Discuss your family situation such as marital status, children or grandchildren.
- Describe the type of transplant you received. (*One donor may have benefited many people*)
- Use simple language. Avoid complex medical terms and giving too much detail about your medical history.
- Describe how long you waited for a transplant. *What was the wait like for you and your family?*
- Explain how the transplant has improved your health and changed your life. *Did you return to work, school or accept a new job? Did you celebrate another birthday? Did your son or daughter marry? Did you become a parent or grandparent?*
- Share your hobbies and interests.
- Since the religion of the transplant recipients is unknown, please consider this if you are including religious comments.

Closing Your Card or Letter

- Sign your *first* name only.
- Do not reveal your address, city or phone number.
- Do not reveal your physician's name or the name and location of the hospital.

Will You Hear From the Donor Family

You may or may not hear from them. Some donor families have said that writing about their loved one and their decision to donate helps them in their grieving process. Other donor families, even though they are comfortable with their decision to donate, may prefer privacy and choose not to write.

Thank You For Writing

We thank you for your thoughtfulness. We know that donor families appreciate hearing from recipients. Remember, the donor family may still be coping with the loss of their loved one, and individuals manage grief in different ways. While you may be celebrating the anniversary of receiving your transplant, someone else is remembering a loss. Help the family understand the importance of their decision to donate. Let them know that their loved one will never be forgotten.

Mailing Your Card or Letter

- Place it in an unsealed envelope
- Include in the envelope on a *separate* piece of paper:
 - a. Your full name
 - b. What you received
 - c. Date of the transplant
- Request that the letter(s) be forwarded to the donor family
- Mail this to:

Tennessee Donor Services
1600 Hayes Street, Suite 300
Nashville, TN 37203
Attn: Family Care Department

Allow Extra Mailing Time

After Tennessee Donor Services receives your card or letter, it will be reviewed to assure confidentiality and then forwarded to the donor family with their permission. This process takes time, so please allow ample time for your card or letter to reach the family.