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Tell Your Teen, Remind Yourself

As I begin writing this article, 118,423 Americans are waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant. Nearly 500 of those people live right here in Nebraska. About 50 of those 500 will die without receiving the organ they desperately need. On any given day, one person in the U.S. dies every 85 minutes because there are not enough donated organs.

Registering to donate organs is a quick and easy thing to do, yet many of us just have not taken the time to do so. Anyone age 16 or over can consent to be a donor by simply choosing the option when getting his or her driver's license. It is the most meaningful random act of kindness you can do. Those who did not do that but wish to become an organ, tissue, and eye donor may visit the Nebraska Organ Recovery website at NEdonation.org. You may also change your status to "non-registered" on that site, if so desired.

If you have been on the fence regarding organ donation, or if you are a bit fearful of the process and legality/moral issues, rest assured that today's laws and procedures create a respectful, ethical flow of events before and after death. Under federal law, all organs recovered for transplant from deceased donors in our country have tight control to ensure equal access without any group or person having an unfair advantage. Individuals with millions of dollars have their place on the waiting list the same as anyone else.

More people than ever before can be donors, due to recent advances in medical technology. Even those over 80 years of age can become donors. Up to 100 people in need can benefit and there is a possibility of eight lives saved from just one person's decision to become a donor.

My passion for your health, wellness, and safety is the driving force for these articles, but this topic creates more drive to educate than most. The year 2016 brought immeasurable gratitude toward a heart donor family for giving life to a precious baby boy in my life, but the year also brought grief from loss of a vibrant mother of two who was on the waiting list for a liver transplant. We never dream that this can affect our lives. It is something "other people" must deal with, until it happens to us.

I offer this challenge today, during National Donate Life Month, to do what you can now to save lives later. Ask questions. Be informed. Talk to your doctor, spiritual advisor, and family. Remind your friends, remind yourself. Visit www.nedonation.org to learn more.