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Monthly news and information about organ and tissue donation from LifeCenter Northwest. To subscribe to the Gift, [click here](#).

Partnering with hospitals and communities in Alaska, Montana, North Idaho, and Washington to save lives through organ and tissue donation.



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## Our Dedication to Donor Families

*A message from Donor Family Aftercare Manager, Ashlei Lind, LICSW*



Serving and caring for our donor families is the cornerstone of our organization. The unexpected death of a loved one can have a significant impact on a family. The Donor Family Aftercare team at LifeCenter Northwest provides support and guidance during this time because we know that donation brings an opportunity for something positive and hopeful to emerge from tragedy.

We have supported donor families who were initially opposed to their loved one's decision to register as an organ/tissue donor, but their opposition was quickly transitioned to thankfulness in learning of the lives that were saved as a result of the donation. Some of these families have gone on to exchange letters with recipients, as well as meet in person, which again aids in the healing process.

*"LifeCenter has made a huge difference in helping me get through the most difficult time of my life. The letters came as a surprise and they made me feel as if they understood. Keep doing what you are doing, it helps! Thank you"*

Grief is a personal experience. It is our goal to provide donor families with support and resources that are specific to each individual's needs. Our team supports donor families in the days, weeks, months and years following the death of their loved one. Our continuum of care begins from the time we meet with a family at the hospital bedside.

In addition to our 18-month formal aftercare and bereavement program, we coordinate events throughout the year that provide an opportunity for, not only our donor families, but the entire donation community to gather. Events like our annual Donation Celebrations, bring donor families, transplant recipients, and medical professionals together to honor those who have given the gift of life.

*"I've been so impressed with the follow up from LifeCenter Northwest. It has*

*opened our eyes to how important donation is."*

It is also important for us to give donor hospital staff a chance to see the positive outcomes of donation. When the doctors and nurses who work tirelessly to make donation possible reconnect with donor families and meet transplant recipients, we hope they see how truly vital they are to the donation process. We also work closely with transplant centers and our tissue partners to provide donor families with recipient updates, which may allow donor families the opportunity to connect with recipients via letter, or even in person. These more personal connections to the lives that their loved one saved or healed continue to provide comfort and solace.

Donor families often share that the gifts their loved one was able to give through organ and tissue donation aids them through their healing process and provides a sense of comfort that lives were saved as a result of this generous gift Thank you for your commitment and dedication to donation. We couldn't do it without you!

*"There is a real and genuine caring and helpful support that comes through everything you do"*

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### **And the Beat Goes On...A Heart Recipient Story**

Life was pretty good for Richard Henderson. He was married, professionally employed, and able to both teach and perform music part time. His cardiac health had never been a concern, and he described himself as being "robustly physical" all his life. That's why, at 55 years old, a severe and life-threatening heart attack caught him completely off guard.



"I suffered what cardiologists call a 'widow-maker,'" Richard recalls. "I was taken by ambulance to the emergency room and immediately prepped for quadruple bypass surgery."

After a lengthy hospital stay, Richard was released to head home. However, his

left ventricle was so severely damaged that he began suffering from congestive heart failure. His health declined rapidly. A pacemaker was implanted in his ailing heart, and he was required to wear a vest with sensors 24/7. Life changed drastically for Richard. His heart was pumping blood at an alarmingly low rate. This made simple tasks, like bending over to pick something up, extremely challenging. Because of breathing difficulty, he had to sleep in an upright position.

“Life looked grim. My wife, son, and the rest of my family were preparing for the worst,” Richard says.

[Read full story here](#)

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### **LifeSaver Series: Dr. Cooper-Flaigle, Sacred Heart Medical Center**



Each month LifeCenter Northwest establishes a Lifesaver Award. This award honors and recognizes those who demonstrate a commitment to improving donation outcomes and culture through their actions, time, and energy. We are proud to announce Dr. Melanie Cooper-Flaigle from Sacred Heart Medical Center.

During a recent donation after circulatory death case, Dr. Cooper-Flaigle exhibited the utmost compassion, kindness, and support while caring for the family of a teenager. She was realistic and empowering during the removal of the ventilator and the transition to comfort care. Sensing the parents' discomfort and anxiety, she softly walked them through the difficult decision by continuing the conversation and allowing opportunities for the family to make decisions regarding their child. She provided these parents with critical information throughout the donation process to empower them to make decisions and demonstrated her unwavering dedication to their child's comfort during the last moments they had. She ensured that the parents had needed information to be as relaxed as possible. Because of the information Dr. Cooper-Flaigle openly shared about the child's condition, the parents were more comfortable, were



able to tell stories and engage with their child and ultimately be fully present, as a family. The doctor remained in the room and silently supported this family and LifeCenter Northwest staff throughout the donation process.

Dr. Cooper-Flaigle inspired everyone in that room and is a prime example of excellence in health care. It is our honor to present Dr. Cooper-Flaigle with this month's LifeSaver Award.

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### [\*\*Donation in the News\*\*](#)

LifeCenter Northwest is grateful for the opportunity to work with news outlets to tell the life-changing stories of donation and transplantation. We work closely with media outlets throughout our region to share the impactful ways donation touches our communities and provide information on donation in general and how the process works. Check out some of the articles that were published in our service area throughout October.

[Kevin O'Connor believes that organ donation really is the greatest gift](#) – Warm 106.9, Bellevue, WA

[Where you die can affect your chance of being an organ donor](#) – Spokesman Review, Spokane, WA (*National circulation*)

[Mission Valley family finds solace in late daughter's gift to others](#) – KPAX, Missoula, MT

[Are you an organ donor? Here's what happens after you die](#) – Right as Rain, UW Medicine

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### [\*\*November Recognitions\*\*](#)

Each November, two campaigns highlight the power and impact of donation within our communities.

**National Donor Sabbath**, observed annually two weekends prior to Thanksgiving. The three-day recognition that seeks to engage all major religions in the United States to echo the message of donation as an act of



love, charity, and generosity. For many who register as an organ, eye, and tissue donor, faith plays a very important role in making their decision to give to others. Additionally, many transplant recipients rely on their faith to get through the trying time awaiting transplant and the recovery process after surgery.




**Give Thanks, Give Life** is a campaign in which we celebrate the season of giving and generosity of organ, eye, and tissue donors. Throughout November and December, LifeCenter Northwest will be sharing stories in an effort to raise awareness about the impact of donation for both donor families and transplant recipients. LifeCenter Northwest extends their own thanks to the many hospitals, physicians, and medical professionals who work tirelessly to give so many a second chance at life.

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**Story of Hope**

## The simple choice *that saves a life*



*Donna Mullin*


At 54 years old, Donna was in the fifth stage of renal failure from Polycystic kidney disease (PKD) and her kidney function was at just nine percent when she was placed on the transplant wait list. After three years on the wait list and four false alarms, Donna finally got the call that would forever change her life. Donna also got the chance to meet her donor's mother, Maria, and family.

"Our visit was mixed with tears, smiles and laughter. Maria said to me, 'Because a piece of Dulce is in me' she considers me a part of her family, and welcomed me to their dinner table. After we parted, I felt like I was going to float up and burst like a balloon I was so happy."

Donna Mullin  
Kidney recipient

By making the referral call within  
60 minutes of clinical triggers  
and time of death,  
you can change a life.

1-888-543-3287





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