



Fall 2010

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The mission of Nebraska Organ Recovery System is to maximize the recovery and quality of organs and tissues for transplantation while maintaining sensitivity, compassion and respect for people of all cultures.

We accomplish this by working in partnership with hospitals in the service area and by providing education to potential donor families, healthcare professionals and the public we serve.

**Give the Most Precious  
Gift of All...**

**LIFE!**



A Donate Life Organization

## Donor Family Celebrates Son, Brother

Written by Jeff and Shari Schlichtemeier

Garrett Lee Schlichtemeier, (a.k.a. Slick), 19, was a student as well as a member of the football team at Chadron State College in Nebraska. His hobbies included sports, hunting, fishing, and hanging with family and friends. On the football field, coaches considered Slick a “ball hawk” for having the knack of always being around the ball and making plays, but he was also a “life hawk” in terms of making the most of every minute of his life.

Garrett was in Alabama visiting his college roommate and teammate over spring break when we got the call early March 8th, 2010 that we had lost our son as a result of severe head injuries sustained in a car accident. We gathered our composure, booked flights and began to develop a game plan for how we were going to deal with the adversity we were about to face. During the flight and to Opelika, Alabama, we decided mourning his loss was a given, but also, rejoicing his life was a must. What follows is a celebration of Garrett’s life.

Garrett was born October 26, 1990 to Jeff and Shari Schlichtemeier of Ogallala, NE. Sports played a major role in Garrett’s life, he played three sports all four years of high school, but football was always his passion. This started at a very young age when he created his own practice arena in the living room of the house. He would run from one end of the room to the other making spectacular catches and scoring numerous touchdowns. Friday nights would be the highlight of his week, because he was the ball boy for the varsity football team. He idolized those high school players, and made every effort to be like them, an exceptional role model making a positive impact on the younger generation.



## Celebration continued...

Garrett, a 2009 graduate of Ogallala High School, was in the top 5 of his graduating class of 92 students, with a GPA of 3.98. He was a member of the National Honor Society and Spanish Honor Society. He received the Presidential Gold and the Cliff L. Johnson academic scholarships to Chadron State College where he attained a 4.0 GPA his first semester.

Garret was truly the “ultimate teammate”. He was always about “who” he could make better instead of “what” he could achieve. He was competitive but the team always came first, and he reinforced this belief each and every day of his life. He led by example and made many personal sacrifices in order for the team and, sometimes, individuals to experience success. He demonstrated his unselfishness even at the end of his life when he became an organ donor. The decision was made by Garrett when he was 16 while filling out his driver license application. He asked his mom Shari, “What does it mean if I check the organ donor box?” Shari replied that if something bad would happen to you, your organs would be donated to people who are in need of specific organs. Garrett didn’t hesitate and said, “When the time comes, I want to help those people.”



We lost an exceptional son, brother, grandson, nephew, cousin and friend. However, he gave all of us the privilege of being a part of many great memories in a very short time. The process of organ donation has played a huge role in the continued celebration of Garrett’s life and in our healing process. We feel that God had a divine purpose for Garrett and made him the “Playmaker” in the organ recipients’ prayers. It makes us proud to know that Garrett was able to give several individuals the opportunity to continue to pursue their goals and dreams.

In Garrett’s honor, we’ve established a memorial scholarship at our high school. The name of the scholarship is “Live Strong, Finish Strong”. The name parallels Garrett’s high level of expectations, drive and accomplishments, both in and out of the classroom. The base criteria for the scholarship is the student must have a 3.5 or higher GPA and participate in three varsity sports his or her senior year. It is a true tribute to Garrett’s achievements, his character and attitude of demanding more of himself than others ever think is possible.

Our family motto has always been to “finish strong”. We have rallied around the strength of this theme, our faith, each other, family members, friends and definitely Garrett to move forward with our lives. Garrett’s “over the top” attitude of constantly raising the bar in terms of achievement was contagious and continues to motivate us. We know he expects all of us to maintain the same high level of commitment and drive to succeed, and we are confident that no one who was a part of Garrett’s life plans on letting him down.

## How has Organ and Tissue Donation Changed your Life?

Are you a member of a donor family? Or perhaps you’ve recieved the gift of life from an organ donor? Do you have a story to share? Nebraska Organ Recovery tries to feature at least one donor family, or recipient story in each of our quarterly newsletters. If you have a story to tell about how donation has changed your life, we’d love to feature it! Simply email Stephanie Lochmiller at [StephanieL@nedonation.org](mailto:StephanieL@nedonation.org) to submit your story.

# National Donor Sabbath Materials Available

National Donor Sabbath is observed two weekends before Thanksgiving, November 12th-14th, as members of faith communities focus on the life-affirming gifts of hope passed to others by organ, eye, tissue, marrow and blood donors. Many faith leaders participate in services and programs to educate their congregations about donation and transplantation and the critical need for donors.

Bible markers (right) are available to Nebraska churches free of charge if they would like to participate in National Donor Sabbath activities. Web banners are also available for those who would like to add them to their website. Churches are encouraged to participate even if it's not during the designated weekends. Materials aren't dated and can be used year round to raise awareness of the need for organ and tissue donors. For more information, or to order bible markers please contact [donatelifenebraska@cox.net](mailto:donatelifenebraska@cox.net).

## Research Reveals Minority Support of Donor Registries on the Rise

A survey commissioned by Donate Life America revealed an increase in the number of minorities registered as organ, eye and tissue donors. Currently, nearly 90 million people in the United States are designated donors.

Of those surveyed who wished to be donors, 78 percent of Caucasians, 77 percent of African Americans, 69 of percent of Hispanics and 60 of percent Asian Americans state they have registered on donor registries. Furthermore, increasingly more people, including minorities (72 percent African American, 71 percent Hispanic and 71 percent Asian) want their decision to donate honored, even if a family has different wishes. Still, with minorities comprising 54 percent of those waiting, there is much work to be done. The nationwide research of 5,100 adults identified several prevailing misconceptions that are shared by not only ethnic minorities, but most Americans:

- 48 percent of people incorrectly believe that in the United States there is a black market where people can buy or sell organs and tissue.
- 28 percent people mistakenly believe that a brain dead person can recover from his or her injuries.
- 25 percent of people falsely believe that doctors will not try as hard to save their lives in an emergency if they know they are registered donors.
- 16 percent of people are concerned that they will not be able to have regular funerals if they are donors.

The 14th annual National Minority Donor Awareness Day, which was first established by President Clinton in 1996, was recognized on August 1st and emphasized the importance of getting the facts and increasing the number of donor designations, and thus lives saved.

"Choose life  
so that you and  
your descendants  
may live."

-Deuteronomy 30: 19



Adopted siblings Tori, Shante and Jay have all received life-saving transplants, thanks to the compassion of organ donors.

### NATIONAL Donor Sabbath

National Donor Sabbath is an interfaith celebration of life and thanksgiving. It is a special time for congregations across America to learn about the critical shortage of organs and tissue and to celebrate the greatest blessing of all—Life.

# Need for Kidney Donors Continues to Rise

## Sherri Petersen, Nebraska Kidney Association

The Nebraska Kidney Association has been serving kidney and transplant patients for over 41 years. Over the past four decades we've seen a dramatic increase of people with kidney disease. In 2008, statistics showed 150,000 people in Nebraska either had or were at risk for developing kidney disease; that number today is 275,000, or one in every six Nebraskans.

The two main causes of kidney disease are diabetes and hypertension. Unfortunately, the number of people affected with these health problems continues to rise, and kidney disease follows. The good news is that the number of living kidney donors has also increased; 62% of all kidney transplants are from living donors. The bad news is that there are still 1,500 Nebraskans undergoing dialysis, waiting for a life-changing transplant.

One fortunate kidney recipient is Becky Spencer. Becky grew up in a family with a history of Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD). She was an only child but had several relatives who suffered with the disease. Becky knew she had high blood pressure and also knew the chance of eventually getting the disease was very high, but she did not get tested regularly. Becky did not want the fear of PKD to prevent her from living her life. When she was finally diagnosed, she accepted her fate and had a fistula implanted. Unfortunately, surgery took its toll physically and emotionally, and by the time dialysis was to start, she was weak and her kidneys were quite enlarged.

Becky's husband Mark urged her to ask friends and family to get tested to be a donor but Becky refused to be a burden and couldn't bring herself to ask anyone to sacrifice so much for her. After dialysis started, she was determined to make it work, no matter how hard the treatments were. Little did she know that Mark had already spoken to his sister Janet about the situation, and while he didn't ask her to be tested, but she immediately offered.

"I knew from the beginning that I would be a match." Janet explains. Janet was tested, and the two women soon discovered that even though they were not blood relatives, the match was as perfect as if they were. According to Becky, she was overwhelmed. "I didn't want to ask anyone, but my husband mentioned it to just one person, and not only was she a match, she was a perfect match!"

After spending just four weeks on dialysis, on March 10, 2008, the sisters-in-law became connected by more than just marriage. They now share a kidney, one they refer to as "Little Spence." Becky knows the advantages of the transplant are many. She no longer needs to receive dialysis, and she is able to work full-time, something she had always done and missed greatly during her time on dialysis. In addition, she is able to travel without having to schedule treatments. The two couples marked the 1st year post-transplant with a trip to Key West.

Both women are excited about the transplant and are eager to share their story. Janet fears that people have become so accustomed to medical advances that transplantation is not the miracle she knows first-hand it to be. Becky hopes people have not become desensitized to the process of giving life.

Janet and Becky are now closer than ever. They talk at least weekly, but usually end up emailing or texting daily. Their children are close. A relationship that was brought together by marriage and strengthened through time has now been permanently bonded through the sharing of a life-giving organ. A kidney allowed one woman to give life so that her sister-in-law can live it to the fullest.

Consider giving the gift of life, either through a living donation, or by simply registering at [www.nedonation.org](http://www.nedonation.org). For more information about kidney disease, programs and services offered by the Nebraska Kidney Association, please visit [www.kidneyne.org](http://www.kidneyne.org).

# Hospital Donation Statistics

Statistics from 01/01/2010 through 9/30/2010

Hospital	Organ	Tissue
Alegent Memorial-Schuyler	0	1
Beatrice Community Hospital	0	2
Bellevue Medical Center	0	1
Blair Memorial Community Hospital	0	3
Bergan Mercy Hospital	1	1
BryanLGH	8	12
Children's Hospital & Medical Center	0	2
Cozad Community Hospital	0	1
Creighton University Medical Center	10	8
Faith Regional Medical Center	0	2
Fremont Area Medical Center	0	2
Genoa Community Hospital	0	1
Good Samaritan Health System	0	6
Great Plains Regional Medical Center	1	3
Immanuel Medical Center	1	5
Lakeside Hospital	1	3
Litzenberg Memorial County Hospital	0	1
Mary Lanning Memorial Hospital	0	3
McCook Community Hospital	0	1
Mercy Hospital	0	2
Methodist Health System	1	5
Methodist Hospice	0	1
Midlands Hospital	1	2
Nemaha County Hospital	0	1
Nebraska Medical Center	4	6
Saint Elizabeth Regional Medical Center	1	1
St. Mary's Community Hospital	0	1
Syracuse-Community Memorial Hospital	0	1
Tri-Valley Health System	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>79</b>



### CALENDAR UPDATE

Due to difficulty obtaining nursing CEU credit approval, the Collaborative Learning Session scheduled for October 14th at the Strategic Air and Space Museum has been postponed. We hope to reschedule this event for the Spring of 2011.

If you have questions please contact John Stallbaum at [JohnS@nedonation.org](mailto:JohnS@nedonation.org), or call 402-733-1800



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