

April 2024

UI HEALTH CARE ORGAN TRANSPLANT CENTER

April is National Donate Life Month! This year, Donate Life America invites us all to look up at the night sky and observe the stars. Stars remind us that even in the darkest night, there is light. Organ donors provide those on the national transplant waiting list a second chance at life. There are many types of organ donation. Don't let your age or health status stop you. Anyone age 15 or older can register to be a lifesaving hero at iowadonornetwork.org/register or organdonor.gov.

What about living donation? We have resources to help. If you or someone you know is interested in being a living kidney donor, visit our website (uiowa.donorscreen.org) to complete the initial screening questionnaire or call us at **319-356-1136**. As a reminder, if you have received a transplant, you are not able to be a living donor for someone else.

A family's perspective on donation

February 10, 2019, was like any other normal winter day until it wasn't. This day changed our lives forever. We have never been the same. Our daughter, Aubrey Rene-Louise Bigger (01/14/17), began to choke. We later found out a toy was lodged in her throat. I did everything I could and called 911. Due to us living in a rural area, it took a long time for emergency services to respond. Aubrey was taken to the nearest hospital and then transferred to the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital. They could not life flight her because of the snow that was falling.

We arrived in Iowa City and were able to see Aubrey. For multiple days, tests were run to check her brain activity. It was declared that Aubrey did not have any brain activity. My husband and I were asked if we wanted to donate Aubrey's organs. Without hesitation, we said yes.

Aubrey's heart went to a young boy, and her liver went to a young girl. Her lungs were not able to be placed, and we donated them to be used for research for cystic fibrosis. When we left Iowa City, her kidneys had not been placed but were put on a pump until they could find a recipient. We did hear a short time later that her kidneys were placed with an adult male.

Knowing that Aubrey was able to save lives has helped our family deal with the grief. Aubrey can never be replaced, and there is a permanent hole in our hearts. We miss out on everything she could have and would have been. Aubrey lives on through others because we chose the gift of life. She is, and forever will be, OUR HERO! We were able to meet the kidney recipient and still to this day have contact with him. He gives us updates on how well his kidneys are doing. Overall, our experience with Iowa Donor Network has been great considering the circumstances. We continue to honor Aubrey and tell her story. #donatelife

Brandy Bigger

Am I able to contact my donor's family?

If you have an interest in contacting your donor family, Iowa Donor Network (IDN) coordinates this process, and it begins with you writing a letter to your donor family. You can access information and suggestions on the [Iowa Donor Network website](http://iowa Donor Network website) or by calling **319-665-3787**. It is never too late to reach out if you desire!

Changing Medicine.
Changing Lives.®

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This section of our monthly newsletter will focus on support and resources offered both by the Organ Transplant Center and throughout the nation. Please utilize these as you need them and reach out with any questions!

Kidney Line: 319-356-1136

Liver Line: 319-356-1137

Medicare and Transplant

Medicare eligibility is based on age, disability, or ESRD. Kidney transplant is an exception to Medicare enrollment. All other organ transplants will need to have Medicare at time of transplant. There is a 1-year enrollment window for Medicare from date of transplant. Delaying enrollment can increase chances of higher out-of-pocket expenses for anti-rejection medication. Medicare Advantage plans cover anti-rejection medications, and out-of-pocket expenses are subject to plan.

* For further questions or coverage changes, please contact the Organ Transplant Center financial counselors.

Video Resources

The Organ Transplant Center has put together videos to better explain the transplant evaluation process and provide additional patient education. Please click the links below to access these videos.

- [Kidney Transplant - Patient Education Videos](#)
- [Liver Transplant - Patient Education Videos](#)
- [Pancreas Transplant - Patient Education Videos](#)

Organ Transplant Support Group

Starting in February 2024, the Organ Transplant Center will begin having our support group every other month. The support group will also be a hybrid version—both in-person and by Zoom. Each group will be focused on a specific topic, with speakers followed by time for discussion. If you have any questions, please contact 319-467-8385.

Location:

Iowa Donor Network
550 Madison Avenue
North Liberty, IA 52317

Date:

April 11, 2024
Speaker – a donor family

Zoom Information:

Meeting ID: 919 3934 1704
Passcode: 601127

Additional Resources

Social Security Disability

- [Adult Disability Starter Kit](#)
- [SSI Child Disability Starter Kit](#)

National Living Donor Assistance Center (NLDAC):
[How to Apply](#)

Iowa Anatomical Gift Fund: [Application](#)

Iowa Donor Network / Writing Your Donor Family:
<https://www.iowadonornetwork.org/transplant-recipients/writing-your-donor-family>