

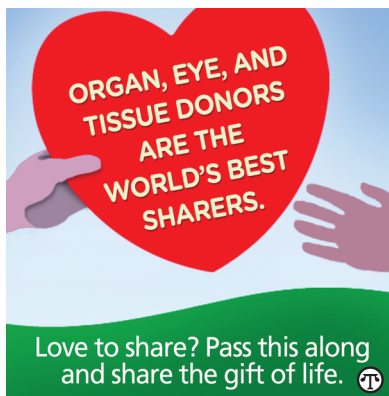
The Gift Of Life Starts With You

(NAPSA)—Many people believe that organ donation begins and ends by checking the box next to “organ donor” when they sign up for their driver’s license or by signing up online. That’s the most important step and one that more than 100 million people in the U.S. have already taken. But what exactly does it mean once you sign up to be a donor?

First, actually becoming a donor doesn’t happen very often. Most often, it happens when a potential donor is in the hospital after a life-threatening accident or illness and on machines that keep blood flowing through the body. While everything possible is done to save that person’s life, there are times when that life cannot be saved. After a person dies and if he or she had previously registered to be a donor, then donation can be a possibility.

Even if the deceased had not registered, a family can still agree to allow that loved one to become a donor. And through this unselfish gift, the donor can save up to eight lives by donating organs...and improve up to 50 more by donating corneas and tissues.

Time becomes a critical factor after the potential donor has died and authorization for donation has been obtained. First, the hospital contacts its regional organ procurement organization (OPO), which manages the organ recovery process. The OPO searches a national transplant waiting list for people who would be good matches for the donated organs. Matches are based on a number of factors, including blood type, tis-



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sue type, body size, how ill the waiting patient is and the distance between the donor’s and patient’s hospitals. Once matches are found, the organs are rushed to the hospitals where the waiting patients receive their lifesaving transplants.

Having more people sign up for organ, eye and tissue donation is critical. Right now, more than 117,000 men, women and children are on the national waiting list for organs. Each week, more than 100 of them will die waiting, because the right match was not available.

But each of us can make the decision to help others receive a second chance at life.

To learn more, visit www.organ donor.gov. While there, you can also register in the state’s donor registry. And make sure to tell your family and friends that you want to be an organ, eye and tissue donor. There are many patients depending on the generosity of people like you.