

This National Donor Day, Share Your Wish with Your Family to Help Save Lives *Rony Thomas, President and CEO, LifeNet Health*

Jordan Gill was a hero. In 2015, he died in an ATV accident. He was just 33 years old, but he made a decision during his lifetime that ensured something beautiful arose from such a tragedy. He chose to be an organ and tissue donor.

Jordan is among the thousands of heroes we honor on National Donor Day, which is celebrated on February 14. We pause on this day to reflect on the tremendous impact of organ, eye and tissue donors.

Last year, we at LifeNet Health had the privilege of preparing donated gifts, commonly called allografts, from nearly 9,000 heroes who became tissue and organ donors. Each donor's story is a testament to the power of one selfless decision — the choice to donate.

On the other side of every donor's story is a patient striving toward wellbeing. In fact, just one tissue donor can enhance more than 150 lives, providing hope to the estimated one in 20 Americans who will need some type of tissue transplant in their lifetime. It could be a neighbor in need of a life-saving organ transplant, a child with a heart defect in need of repair, an injured athlete hoping to get back on the field, or a woman recovering from surgery in her fight against breast cancer.

Thanks to the kindness of donors and their loved ones, 424 Virginians received life-saving organ transplants last year, and more than 154,000 patients around the world had their health restored thanks to donated tissue. We are immensely proud of the role we play in facilitating these acts of kindness from one person to another.

You, too, have a role to play in supporting donation: Talk about it.

According to Donate Life Virginia, sixty percent of adults in the commonwealth are registered donors. That's more than four million people who share Jordan's desire to give the gift of life and health with others. Making that desire a reality, though, requires the help of loved ones who provide crucial background information during the 24-hour timeframe in which donated tissue can be recovered. However, many people who register as donors never discuss that decision with their loved ones, potentially preventing their wishes from being fulfilled.

That is why, in honor of National Donor Day, we encourage you to take time to:

- Learn about the donation process. You can find out more at donatelifevirginia.org
- Talk to your loved ones about your wishes for organ and tissue donation. National Donor Day is a great way to start the conversation.
- Help bridge the gap by sharing the importance of donation on social media and with your family and friends who may not be registered.

- Register to be an organ and tissue donor at donatelifevirginia.org. It only takes a minute. Ninety-five percent of Americans are in favor of being a donor, but only 54 percent are registered.

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