**NATIONAL DONATE LIFE MONTH – ARTICLES FOR HOSPITAL DISK**

**Robin, Donor Mom – Centennial, CO**

*Son was an organ & tissue donor*

**** Robin and her 22-year-old son Joseph were best friends. And he was not afraid to let everyone know it. While some kids might be embarrassed that their mom worked in the high school cafeteria, Joe wasn’t. He would hug his mom in the middle of the school day. When he was diagnosed with epilepsy in the fall of 2007, Joe made a pact with his mom that whenever he thought he was about to have a seizure he would call her, as he always knew before it happened. On December 30, 2007, Joe called his mom at 9:45 a.m.

“Fortunately, I didn’t go to church that morning, like I usually do, because I wouldn’t have gotten his call,” said Robin. “We were on the phone for 10 minutes when I heard the phone drop and Joe hit the ground.” Joe died on January 1, 2008.

Joe had discussed his decision to be an organ and tissue donor with his mom several months before his death. It came as no surprise to Robin and the rest of Joe’s family because he always extended help to others. Joe could light up a room with his boisterous laughter, his great big bear hugs and constant smile. Not to mention, he stood strong beside his life’s motto “One Love” from the notorious Bob Marley song. Joe’s initial decision to register to be an organ donor at the age of 15 helped save and heal the lives of seven people.

**Pull out quote:** “I give back because it is how I keep Joe’s memory alive. And it helps me cope, which is one of the biggest things that keeps me going,” said Robin.

**PHOTO CAPTION**

**Debbie (right) – Grand Junction, CO**

*24-Year Kidney Recipient*

My name is Debi Youngerman and I’m from Grand Junction, Colorado on the Western Slope. I received a new kidney on October 26, 1988 – nearly 24 years ago – at Porter Hospital in Denver.

**Pull out quote:** “When I was first told about my Kidney disease my doctor said two things, “we are going to get you a transplant and congratulations, most marriages don't make it through all this.”

I am a proud Advocate for Donor Alliance working to educate the communities around me the importance of registering to be an organ and tissue donor at DonateLifeColorado.org.

**Larry & Bill – Cheyenne, WY**

*Donor father & recipient of son’s heart*

****Years ago, Larry accompanied his son Tyler to renew his operator’s license. As Tyler filled out his paperwork, he asked Larry if he was a registered organ and tissue donor. Larry was, and they chatted briefly about their wishes.

In May of 2010, Larry and his wife Debbie tragically lost Tyler, their only son. Tyler was a registered donor, and because he had designated his decision and spoken with Larry about it years before, Larry and Debbie knew exactly what Tyler wanted.

Within a few days of Tyler’s death, Larry and Debbie received their first of many letters from Donor Alliance.

“Those white envelopes became more than just with information, but were much-needed morale boosters for us. We always opened them together. The letters gave us a small glimpse of what Tyler’s gifts had provided to others.”

A few months later, the couple sent letters to the recipients through Donor Alliance, telling them what Tyler was like. Soon they received a letter from the man who had received Tyler’s heart, Bill. They knew from that first letter they would someday meet.

On January 6, 2011 they met Bill for the first time, from Denver, CO. Just a week later Larry, Debbie and Bill took a cross-country trip back East to meet each other’s extended families. They continue to keep in touch to this day, on occasion, even volunteering together for Donor Alliance.

**Pull out quote:** “I have thought back to that day Tyler renewed his license many times since we lost him. I’ve thought about how a minute-long conversation mattered so much to us and how it would be helpful to so many people. Tyler’s gifts will continue to give a better life to so many people. Knowing this has done so much for our family.”

**Babette, Donor Mom (far right) – Denver, CO**

*Daughter was an organ & tissue donor*

Brianna was in the ICU for four days following a tragic self-inflicted accident. When we were told that she would not make it, we knew that Brianna wanted to be a donor, because she had asked her Daddy what the heart on his license meant. I never knew they had discussed this before until that moment, when Donor Alliance came to talk to us. My husband knew that he wanted to give Brianna her wish and I supported my husband and daughter 100%.

**Pull out quote:** “We knew it was the right thing to do and never gave it a second thought.”

I remember when my husband and I walked into the operating room to say good bye to our daughter, the room was quite except for some beautiful music. We were worried about hearing the machines but it was so peaceful. We had our time to say our last words and tell her how much we loved her. We had time to kiss her and tell her how proud we were that she was doing this, we were never rushed and only felt love and compassion in the room.

Brianna helped people when she was alive and now she was going to give the gift of life in her death. We know that she saved at least three families with her organs and now these families have a second chance at life. They will see their children and grandchildren grow up. She also saved and healed many through the gifts of her tissue.

Our hope is that everyone thinks about this selfless gift to give, providing hope to other families. Although we have had to grieve the loss of our daughter, we are blessed and honored that she gave life to others.

**

**Peter, Donor Brother – Golden, CO**

*Sister was an organ & tissue donor*

Peter Lang was not quite 17 years old when his older sister Perri lost her life. The siblings grew up in a loving family in a small community in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado.

"We were typical siblings," recalled Peter. "At a young age we fought about everything, but as we both grew up things changed a bit and we shared secrets, talked through our problems together, and had each other's backs." In the last few years of Perri's life, they became closer than ever.

Perri was a strong-willed, spirited 20-year-old with beautiful blue eyes and an unforgettable smile. She played softball starting at a very young age and became a reliable centerfielder on a team she loved. Perri was attending a local cosmetology school with the intent of beginning her chosen career. Tragically, Perri died after sustaining injuries during a single-car accident on the street where she lived.

"Just as I could not have imagined my life without Perri in it, I also could not have imagined being faced with the decisions that would need to be made in the final hours of her life," said Peter. Because Perri was a registered organ donor, Peter and his family were guided by donation professionals from Donor Alliance in the final days of her life. "They helped us make sense of all the details," recalled Peter.

This past July, the first annual Perri Jaye Lang Memorial Tournament raised money for Perri's namesake foundation, which awards a scholarship to a softball player entering her freshman year of college.

Peter and his family celebrate Perri's gifts in life *and* in death.

**Pull out quote:** "With time, I have realized what a great impact this unspeakably tragic event has had," said Peter. "With the gifts from my sister Perri, three lives were saved and many others have been changed. To me, there is nothing more special than the gift of life.”

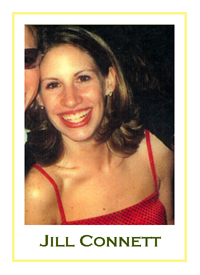
**

**Melody & Carol - Colorado Springs, CO**

*Donor mother & recipient of daughter’s liver*

**

On May 24, 2003, Melody Connett’s 24-year-old daughter Jill suffered unsurvivable injuries in an auto accident. Jill and Melody had spoken about donation, and Jill had the heart on her license, indicating she was registered as an organ and tissue donor. Because of the extent of her injuries, only her liver could be recovered for transplant.

“Donor Alliance explained practical things, such as what would happen to her body and how long she could stay on the ventilator,” recalled Melody, a 59-year-old banker. “They also explained that six months after the donation, I could try to contact her recipient by sending a picture and letter to Donor Alliance. They would forward it to the recipient and, if the recipient so desired, the recipient could respond to Donor Alliance and we could meet.

“I waited the six months and sent a letter and picture of Jill. Each night I hoped there would be a reply in my mailbox, but there was not. Thinking maybe my letter had been lost, I tried a second time, but got no answer. All I wanted to know was if the transplant had been a success. After receiving no response to my second letter, I assumed that either the transplant had not been successful or the recipient simply didn’t want to be bothered, so I gave up.”

The following year, Melody ran in Donor Alliance’s signature event, the Donor Dash 5K (honoring organ donors, recipients and those waiting), with her cousin Linda and friend Kay. In 2005, Melody formed a team, “Jill’s Fighting Snappers,” to honor Jill, and had 10 blue and green t-shirts printed for her teammates with Jill’s photo on the back. Each year, Jill’s Fighting Snappers grew until it was 33 people strong in 2007 and in 2012 grew to over 75 people.

While walking the course, in 2007, Melody’s friend Deb saw a woman and her daughter walking in white shirts with computer photo printouts of Jill pinned to their backs. The woman, Carole Pirri, was Jill’s liver recipient.

**Pull out quote:** "When Carole crossed the finish line, we hugged and cried for a long, long time. Then she went to each team member and hugged them, too. It was truly a Hallmark moment,” said Melody.

Carole and Melody are now great friends and speak together on behalf of organ donation; they celebrate the Donor Dash as their anniversary. Carole accompanied Melody to Pasadena, CA in 2009 to help decorate the Donate Life float and Jill’s floragraph.

“Margaret Mead once said ‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world…indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.’ It is time for us to step up and make a difference…*be a verb*, not an adjective…and get this done," said Melody. "Register now and discuss donation with your family!”