A Litany of Remembrance

In the rising of the sun and in its going down, we remember them.
In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter, we remember them.
In the opening of buds and in the rebirth of spring, we remember them.
In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer, we remember them.
In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn, we remember them.
In the beginning of the year and when it ends, we remember them.
When we are weary and in need of strength, we remember them.
When we are lost and sick at heart, we remember them.
When we have joys we yearn to share, we remember them.
So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.

Gittelsohn, R. B. (1975) Gates of Prayer

As the seasons change, we are reminded of what once was. On behalf of all of us at LifeSource, we wish your family memories that will carry you through the coming season and beyond.
It was 4am. This memory came back to me when I was in that space between being awake and asleep. It was nearly two months to the day of David’s car accident.

I was in my parent’s kitchen, making strawberry shortcake for an afternoon snack. The sweet scent of the strawberries filled the room. The angel food cake was soft and baked to perfection. The sun was shining warm and bright through the east facing window. Birds were chirping and fluttering in the bushes just below it.

David sprang in from the living room with his familiar energy to enjoy every moment. He was on his way back outside to play with his brothers, Jim and Billy. He was about 10 years old. His teeth were still coming in and had small gaps between them. His hair was still very blonde, soft, and combed over to his right side. He was wearing his favorite red wind-breaker, khaki pants, and black tennis shoes. The top of his head nearly reached the height of my chin.

David suddenly stopped to give me a hug and said, “I love you more than everything!” “Everything?” I asked as I held him. “Yep!” he said with a hop. Enjoying the moment, I held him and playfully asked, “Do you love me more than ice cream?” “Yep!” he said with a hop. “Do you love me more than your bike?” “Yep!” he said with a double hop. “Do you love me more than PIZZA?” (His second favorite food.) “Ummm, yep!” he answered with hesitation, but with a triple hop.

Having such fun with him, I quizzed him with REAL challenge – my homemade spaghetti and meatballs. “Do you love me more than SPAGHETTI?!?” (His all time favorite food.) David stopped mid-hop, held only to the earth by the very tip of his toes and my loving arms. His lips puckered and pulled to the left. His nose creased up, and his beautiful blues eyes looked up to the left, as he thoughtfully contemplated the challenge put before him. It took him a few moments, but finally, to my relief, he answered. He wrapped his arms tighter around me and said, “Yep! I love you more than EVERYTHING!”

With that, I hugged him with laughter and a kiss on the lips. He quickly ran out to play with his brothers. But not before grabbing a piece of angel food cake with one swift motion.

Written in loving memory by David’s mom, Nancy
June 1985 – January 2005
The National Donor Recognition Ceremony is an event that gathers families from all over the country and the world to celebrate, commemorate, remember and learn. It is sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services, National Kidney Foundation, Division of Transplantation and many other organizations. It takes place during odd-numbered years in Washington, DC. LifeSource, in partnership with MTF, was able to sponsor the attendance of two donor families at this year’s event. Sheryl, Noah, and Marissa Mann attended in honor of their husband and dad, Jeff, and Deb and Denny Moore, attended in honor of their son Brian.

It is a weekend of families coming together to share memories of joy and pain, to be heard and to listen. Sheryl Mann, donor wife, said, “I guess the main thing that I took away from the conference was there are other people out there that are going through what I’m going through. It’s nice when you don’t have to explain yourself because everyone already knows what you are thinking and feeling.”

The weekend included many different seminars on everything from single parenting, grief and movement, explanations of tissue donation and brain death. Families were also able to share experiences and support one another between seminars and events.

During the National Quilt Pinning Ceremony in the morning, family members spoke of their loved one – their grief and their struggles, how proud they were of them and how much they missed them. Tears came freely and often, but everyone knew they were in a safe place. Deb Moore said of the experience, “I could be who I am, ALL of who I am, Brian’s mom, and Denny be Brian’s dad, there without anyone thinking we were hanging on to some unhealthy issue…… that is actually refreshing, even as it aches.”

It ended with a beautiful ceremony led by Acting Surgeon General Dr. Kenneth Moritsugu, donor husband and donor father himself. Each family received a national medal of honor for the gift given by their loved one. As the weekend ended and people started to get ready to travel home, phone numbers and emails were exchanged and support networks were widened. It was a powerful reminder that donor families are not alone in their grief or love for their loved one.
The theme of the 2008 Rose Parade, to be held in Pasadena, California on January 1, 2008 at 10:00 AM (CST) is “passport to the world's celebrations.” The theme of the Donate Life float, which has become a mainstay in the parade lineup, is “life takes flight.”

This year’s float design features a balloon festival, with four colorful hot-air balloons rising over 24 riders whose lives have been saved and renewed by donation. The balloons are adorned with more than 30 floragraphs – artistic portraits created with floral materials – of donors from across the country. For the first time this year, donor family members will accompany the float on foot. Wyman and Marna Johnson's daughter, Karlynn, (pictured below) will be featured as one of the floragraphs. The Johnsons, who live in Shakopee, MN, are planning to travel to California to help decorate the float and watch the parade.

The Family Circle Rose Dedication Program offers those touched by organ and tissue donation the opportunity to honor loved ones by dedicating a rose tagged with a personal message and placed in the Family Circle Garden. The Garden is a living memorial on the Donate Life Rose Parade Float, which is seen by millions of people from around the world on New Year’s Day.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE ROSE DEDICATION?

Any family or individual who has been touched by organ and tissue donation and transplantation can dedicate a rose in the Family Circle Garden to bear the name of someone who has given, received, awaits or died while waiting for the gift of life.

Your dedicated rose demonstrates to millions of Rose Parade specta-
tors how lives have been touched and transformed by organ and tissue donation. Your rose can also become the focus of local media to inspire your own community to donate life.

**FAMILY CIRCLE ROSE DEDICATION PACKAGES**

Individual families can choose from one of four Family Circle Packages:

**The Family Circle**
- “Rose Bud” $25
- “Rose Blossom” $50
- “Bouquet” $100
- “Garden” $200

For a complete breakdown of each package or to dedicate a rose in the Family Circle Garden, please visit [www.donatelifefloat.org](http://www.donatelifefloat.org) under Dedicate a Rose. Please note, there are December deadlines for making a dedication.

Jill Geary began making memory bears following the death of her sister, Mary, who became a donor in 1986. “After many tears, I decided to create loving, lasting remembrances of my family members from things they owned, used and enjoyed.” She also creates special “heart” pillows, again made from one’s personal effects.

Let Jill help you create a special memory of your loved one. Each item is individually crafted from material you supply and is a unique remembrance of your loved one’s life. Items to consider would be a special quilt, pajamas, sweatshirts, shirts, jeans, suits, dresses or any type of item that can be sewn. Jill will create a lasting keepsake for you and your family to treasure.

For more information, please contact Jill Geary at 218-736-7616.
On July 31, 2007, Faith’s Lodge opened its doors to welcome couples and families who have a seriously ill child or those who have suffered the death of a child. Believed to be the first retreat of its kind, The Lodge offers those who visit an opportunity to reflect on the past, renew strength for the present, and build hope for the future while surrounded by others who have experienced something similar.

Faith’s Lodge was created by Mark and Susan Lacek, a Minneapolis couple who experienced the loss of their first daughter, Faith Ann, at birth. Shortly after their loss, Mark and Susan escaped to a northwoods setting to share time together and grieve the loss of their daughter. As they spent time surrounded by the beauty of nature, Susan could feel herself beginning to heal. It was shortly after this experience that Mark and Susan knew they wanted to create a northwoods lodge where others who have shared similar experiences could gather to support one another and have an opportunity to begin or continue their healing journey. With Mark and Susan’s vision and the help of family, friends, and a dedicated group of professionals, Faith’s Lodge quickly moved from dream to reality.

Faith’s Lodge is situated just outside of Webster, Wisconsin, and is nestled among 80 picturesque acres of soaring pines, open-prairie, and gently rolling hills. Just a two hour drive from the Twin Cities metro, arrival at the lodge provides an opportunity to escape the demands of everyday activities while focusing on the healing process.

While at Faith’s Lodge, guests can participate in programming and activities that were designed to allow couples and families to come together at different times and participate in a way that meets their needs, doing as much or as little as they would like. Specifically, there are separate weeks for bereaved couples, bereaved families and families who have a child with a life-limiting condition. Some weeks include more structured activities than others. Regardless of when people choose to visit, they will find Faith’s Lodge to be a place of comfort and peace that facilitates their healing journey.

Couples and families are invited to stay at Faith’s Lodge from one to five nights once during each calendar year and must have a referral from a member of their healthcare team or faith community, a mental health professional or an approved service organization, such as LifeSource. A suggested minimum donation of $25/night will be requested of guests; however, no one will be turned away for financial reasons. To learn more about Faith’s Lodge, please visit their website at www.faithslodge.org.
Donor Family Retreat
Jill Halimi, Family Services Coordinator

Last winter I had the opportunity to meet donor mother Rebecca Durrenberger as she was visiting the Twin Cities from South Dakota. Learning of Rebecca’s life experience as well as her counseling background, we discussed the idea of holding a donor family retreat – a safe place for donor families to gather to remember their loved ones and share their grief.

With great enthusiasm, Rebecca quickly began planning the retreat, which was held June 15 – 17 at the beautiful Blue Cloud Abbey in Marvin, South Dakota. Rebecca is a donor mother, teacher, photographer and writer. She has drawn from a variety of loss experiences, including divorce, loss of job, deaths of parents and friends, and the murder of her son, Ragan, in 1998. Rebecca and her associate, Sara Alemán, present their Loss and Recovery workshops to corporations, churches, grief support groups and people who are on the road to recovery. Currently, Rebecca is working at the Abbey, involved in a project which preserves historic Native American photographs.

Thirteen LifeSource donor family members attended the retreat. Wyman and Marna Johnson, whose daughter Karlynn died in 2005 had the following to say about their experience: “It was an emotionally exhausting weekend; yet it was uplifting and soothing. It was a unique opportunity to spend an extended period of time with others who had all experienced a tragic loss and were all donor families. The common bond that we all shared drew us to each other and gave us the freedom to share our pain and be open with our feelings.”

Nancy Tetu’s son, David, died in 2005. She traveled to the Abbey with great trepidation. Yet she summoned the courage to attend and shared her feelings about Rebecca when she returned: “I feel she was the ideal person to facilitate this retreat because she is one of us. She also has a great kindness and compassion for others, as well as a natural calmness that seemed to put us at ease.”

Everyone who attended the retreat shared this sentiment. It was an experience like no other. It’s quite rare to ever meet another donor family member let alone have the opportunity to spend an entire weekend together! Rebecca is hoping to hold another retreat next year, possibly at another location or perhaps she’ll return to the Abbey. If you are interested in attending such an event, please email us at familyservices@lifesource.org so that we may contact you should the opportunity arise.
WE BELIEVE THAT life IS A gift TO SHARE.

We pledge to provide the bridge between the loss of life and the gift of life through organ and tissue donation and transplantation.

LifeSource is the non-profit organization dedicated to saving lives through organ and tissue donation in the Upper Midwest. The LifeSource service area includes North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and portions of western Wisconsin.

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