Organ & Tissue DONATION
At this time of sadness and loss, we offer our sympathy. We hope you find comfort in knowing that your loved one may help others through the donation of organs or tissues.

Donation is an act of great compassion and generosity, and it leaves a profound legacy. Through the extraordinary gift of organ and tissue donation your loved one may provide others with renewed hope and a second chance at life.

This booklet will guide you through the donation process and answer your questions about organ and tissue donation. Please feel free to write your thoughts or notes throughout this book. If you have questions, please call LifeSource at the number provided.
There are times when a family makes a decision to withdraw support on behalf of their loved one who has suffered a devastating brain injury and is not brain dead. Following this decision, families are given the opportunity to consider organ and tissue donation. This type of donation is called donation after cardiac death.

Following your family’s authorization for donation, your loved one will remain in the hospital on a ventilator while hospital staff perform medical tests to determine eligibility for organ and tissue donation.

Once testing is completed, your loved one will be removed from the ventilator. Your family may be with them until their heart stops. If the heart stops within the specified time frame of ____ minutes, you will be escorted out of the room and organ recovery will proceed.

If death does not occur within the specified time frame, organ donation will not occur and your loved one will be moved to a room where you can continue to be with them. (Pre-designated room: ______________________) Tissue and eye donation may still be an option at the time of your loved one’s death.

In some instances, a patient will continue to deteriorate and have so much damage to their brain that they die before their heart stops beating (see brain death on the opposite page). If this happens, the process of donation after cardiac death will be stopped while the hospital staff determines brain death. If your loved one is declared brain dead, the donation process will begin again and we will work to maximize your loved one’s life-saving legacy.
AUTHORIZATION FOR DONATION
If your loved one made a decision to be a donor, that generous decision will be honored. Your loved one may have documented their decision by checking the box on their driver’s license, registering in the online donor registry, or through an advanced directive or living will. Their decision to be an organ, tissue and eye donor is a binding authorization recognized by state law and honored by LifeSource.

If your loved one hasn’t documented a decision about donation, you will be asked to make a decision on their behalf. Donor families overwhelmingly say their loved one’s donation gave them strength, and they find comfort in knowing that their loved one was able to leave a legacy of life.

MEDICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY
You will be asked questions related to your loved one’s health, medical and social history in order to ensure the safety and viability of organs and tissues for transplant. Your LifeSource coordinator will go through the questionnaire with you.

MATCHING ORGANS WITH RECIPIENTS
The LifeSource donation coordinator communicates with the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) to find the best matches between your loved one and waiting recipients. This system is designed to fairly distribute organs based on medical urgency, genetic matching, waiting time and geography. Factors such as race, gender, income or celebrity status do not influence who receives organs and tissues.

ORGAN AND TISSUE RECOVERY
Organs are surgically removed in the hospital operating room and transported to the recipients’ transplant centers. Tissue and eye recovery follow organ recovery. Great care and respect are shown to your loved one and open casket funeral arrangements remain an option.

TRANSPLANTATION
Organs are transplanted as soon as possible. Tissue is sent to LifeSource’s tissue partners where the gift will be prepared for transplantation in the coming months and years.

TRANSPLANT RECIPIENTS
Several weeks after your loved one’s donation, LifeSource will send you a letter explaining which organs and/or tissues were donated, as well as general information about the recipients. To respect the confidentiality of both your family and the recipient, names will not be revealed.

Occasionally, recipients choose to send cards or write letters of appreciation to their donor’s family. Our donor family services coordinators will forward these letters or cards to you, along with information about corresponding with recipients and their families. The decision to communicate is a personal one; you may choose whether or not you are comfortable sending or receiving such a letter.

If your loved one’s eyes are donated, the Lions Eye Bank will send you a letter explaining the outcome of the donation and impact on individuals in need.

LIFESOURCE: WHO WE ARE
LifeSource is a non-profit organization dedicated to saving lives through organ and tissue donation in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and parts of western Wisconsin.

All costs for donation are paid by LifeSource and passed onto the appropriate transplant centers. If you receive a bill related to donation, please contact us as soon as possible.

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU
You, your family, and your loved one will not be forgotten. As a donor family, you will receive support from LifeSource in the months and years to come, including grief resources, the ability to participate in remembrance events and the opportunity to connect with other grieving families whose loved ones gave the gift of life. A family services coordinator will be in touch with you. In the meantime, please feel free to call our family services coordinators at 1.888.536.6283.

ABOUT DONATION
Organ and tissue donation is a precious opportunity to save lives. In addition to the impact on potential recipients, donation can be healing for the families of donors. Donor families overwhelmingly share with us that their loved one’s legacy of saving lives through donation helped them in their grief journey.

Donation may allow one person’s legacy to breathe new life into the lungs of a patient suffering from cystic fibrosis, free children and adults from a life tethered to a dialysis machine, or pump new life into the veins of a person in need of a heart transplant. It can also shield burn victims from infection, prevent amputation in patients with cancer and allow people in our community the opportunity for a full and active life.

Organs that can be donated include heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, pancreas and intestine. Tissues that can be donated include eyes, skin, veins, connective tissue, tendons, bone and heart for valves.
Organ and Tissue Donation in the Upper Midwest

LifeSource is the non-profit organization that manages all organ donation and most tissue donation in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and western Wisconsin. You can reach LifeSource by calling 1.888.536.6283 or visiting www.life-source.org.

Eye Donation in our region is managed by the following organizations:


South Dakota Lions Eye Bank – 1.800.245.7846 or www.sdleb.org.


KEVIN’S STORY

If Kim Morsching had to pick one word to describe her son, Kevin, it would be arête. Kevin fell in love with the Greek word, which translates to “pursuing excellence.” To Kevin, arête wasn’t just a word – it was the mantra for his life.

A risk-taker and thrill-seeker, Kevin wasn’t happy unless he was giving one hundred percent. “He hit the ground running and never stopped,” explains Kim. “It’s almost as if he knew his life was going to be short and he wanted to make the very most of his time here.”

In August 2007 Kevin was about to enter his junior year of college when he was fatally injured in a skateboarding accident. Although Kevin’s recovery was impossible, he answered the prayers of many people who were waiting for a second chance at life.

Kevin died as he lived – giving one hundred percent. He made the decision to be an organ and tissue donor when he applied for his driver’s license and his generous decision was supported by his family.

Kevin’s heart, lungs, kidneys, liver and pancreas saved the lives of six people. Kevin’s gifts of tissue will be used in dozens of life-changing surgeries for years to come.

“Donation was our bright spot. You know all of the good things about your child, and this is their last good thing.”