

Imagine a World Where No One Dies Waiting For A Lifesaving Transplant

I signed up to be an organ, eye, and tissue donor when I was thirteen years old. Back then, I wasn't aware that there are "more than 100,000 people on the waiting list for a lifesaving organ transplant in the U.S." (Donate Life America 2024), that another person is added to that list every eight minutes (Donate Life America 2024), or that "seventeen people die each day waiting for an organ transplant" (HRSA 2024). I was volunteering with my family and other members of the Washington Regional Transplant Community at the NBC News 4 DC Health and Fitness Expo. We were there raising awareness about how organ, eye, and tissue donors save lives. We were encouraging others to register to become donors when it dawned on me. How can I ask others to be a donor when I haven't registered myself? That's when I stepped away from the crowd searching for free merch, turned around, and asked, "Can I register?"



Signing up to be a donor was an easy decision for me. You see, my sister Lexie has been struggling with kidney failure since the day she was born. A deceased donor saved her life when she was two and a half years old. She thrived with that kidney for several years, but there were some complications that eventually led to that organ's decline. By the time we volunteered at that NBC Health and Fitness Expo in 2019, my sister had been on the waiting list for a deceased donor kidney for three years. Sadly, all our family and friends had been ruled out as potential living donors. It wasn't easy for her to find a match because she had antibodies against 98% of the population.



Having a sister who has struggled her whole life with kidney failure is not only eye-opening, it's terrifying. My sister was in and out of the hospital so frequently, I never knew when I went to school each morning whether she would be there when I returned home. I cannot even count the number of times the school counselor came to tell me that a family friend was coming to pick me up because my sister was in the hospital. Again. Each time she was admitted to the hospital, I worried she wouldn't make it. Then, my sister stopped going to school. She was too sick. She was on dialysis, and the nearest center offering dialysis for pediatric patients was two hours away. I felt helpless and afraid. While my classmates were worrying about their algebra tests, I was worrying my sister wouldn't survive another day.



That's why I signed up to be a kidney donor.

Kidney disease is brutal, not just for the person who is battling the disease, but for their entire family, their friends, and their community. These are not nameless, faceless, people. They are our siblings, our parents, our aunts and uncles, our neighbors, and friends.



I'm eighteen now. In the five years since I signed up to be an organ, eye, and tissue donor, my Aunt Lexie, my neighbor Curtis, my friend Brian, and my sister Lexie have all received lifesaving kidney transplants. Organ donors saved their lives. Sadly, our friend Matthew's mother died while waiting for a kidney. She was one of the seventeen people who die each day while waiting for an organ transplant.

Look, I get it. No one wants to think about dying, least of all a thirteen-year-old girl who has spent her entire life watching her sister fight to stay alive. But imagine if the last thing you did while departing this world saved other people's lives. One donor can save up to eight lives and improve the quality of life of many others (Donate Life America 2024). The year I registered to be a donor, 2,854,838 Americans died (CDC 2020). Even if only one percent of those individuals had signed up to be an

organ donor, that could have saved every person on that waiting list (considering each donor saves up to eight lives). If enough people signed up to be an organ donor, no one would die while waiting for a lifesaving transplant. Please join me in making that a reality. You can sign up to be an organ, eye, and tissue donor through Infinite Legacy using this [link](#). Then, spread the word. Encourage your friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers to sign up too. Together, we can do this. We can create a world where no one dies while waiting for a lifesaving transplant.



References

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