

# News

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\*\*\*\*UT Southwestern helps introduce  
new organ/tissue symbol

DALLAS--Although the concept of organ and tissue donation is becoming more accepted around the country, there is presently no universal symbol of donor intent. While some states provide for donor intent statements on the backs of drivers' licenses and other states recognize donor cards, these documents are often overlooked when a death occurs. Therefore, there is a need for a sign of donor awareness that is quickly and easily recognizable.

A pilot program for organ and tissue donor awareness is being launched in the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area in connection with National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week (April 24-30).

A universal symbol of donor intent is being introduced by the Coalition on Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex and the Community Advisory Board of Transplant Services at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. This new symbol is called the Key to Immortality. Members of these groups hope that once the program is accepted in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, it will be adopted by other programs around the country.

Literally a key, the new donor symbol is a little over two inches long and plated with gold with the figure eight-like infinity sign on top. On it are the words "Key to Immortality" and "Tissue/Organ Donor" and the phone number, 214-688-2609. The key, designed by Dallas graphic artist Bud Mantz, is made to fit on a regular key ring, where it can easily be spotted by firemen, paramedics, police, doctors, nurses or other officials. Moreover, it was designed so that it falls from the ring at an angle in order to be seen quickly in case of an emergency, said Kim Bufkin, chairman of the coalition and a member of the Transplant Services staff. It is also hoped that the jutting gold key, bearing the infinity symbol, will serve as a conversation piece to get people to discuss the decision to become tissue and organ donors.

The concept for the Key to Immortality came from Dallas businessman and civic leader Stanley Marcus. Marcus, who has been well-known for creative marketing techniques throughout his career as a major force behind the success of Neiman-Marcus, is one of the founders of the Community Advisory Board for Transplant Services at UT Southwestern.

Bufkin said that launching into the development of such a major project was obviously going to take more resources than the UT transplant advisory board could provide, so the group approached the coalition, which was already active in promoting transplant-related projects and issues in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

Bufkin has been working in the area of fund raising and donor awareness for a number of years. As a volunteer she helped organize group activities that have raised thousands of dollars for research in tissue banking and to equip the new burn center at Dallas' Parkland Memorial Hospital. Later she began working professionally with Transplant Services, besides working with a major public awareness program for tissue and organ donor awareness, Bufkin also works with education programs for professionals. She helped organize both the Community Advisory Board, the Nurses' Advisory Council of the UT transplant services and Southwest Organ Bank and the Dallas/Fort Worth coalition.

(More)



Bufkin and transplant services head Ellen Heck, a UT Southwestern faculty member, were aware of the need for such a universal symbol. They turned to the advisory board for help. Marcus, the idea man behind the symbol, was actually the person to come up with the concept of the key.

"What is it everyone has with them wherever they go?" he asked first himself and then the group. The answer: at least one key. "We could develop a key to go on donors' key rings and call it the Key to Immortality," he decided.

That was the beginning of an idea. Marcus volunteered to take the idea to his friend and creative designer Bud Mantz for a prototype design.

Marcus himself was the recipient of the first key and is literally asking people to join him in carrying the Key to Immortality. "In this way we can extend life through death," he says. "Transplantation of organs and tissues can change thousands of lives daily. However, there will be little progress without donors--without those who want their lives and their deaths to have meaning," he said.

Also joining Marcus in launching of the project is Rodger Meier, also a major Dallas businessman and civic leader. Meier, who is vice chairman of the transplant advisory board at Southwestern, said that he initially became involved in the group because of his friendship with former sportscaster Frank Gleiber, whose wife Kathy (now Kathy Musolino) heads the board. Although she had been working for several years with Bufkin in the areas of fund raising and organ and tissue donor awareness, the opportunity for donation was lost at the time of Frank's death "because no one came to talk with me and just ask." At the time of grief "although I knew that Frank wanted to be a donor, I just didn't think of it in time," she said.

Meier said that he believes becoming organ and tissue donors can be a kind of religious expression. He said his entire family joins with him in this attitude. "Unfortunately, one of the problems in educating people about this subject is that most people don't want to talk about death."

Bufkin said that she hopes the key will act as an "ice-breaker" so that people will be able to talk about tissue and organ donation before a tragedy occurs. Then they will have plenty of time to consider the idea, and if they decide to become donors, they will have time to talk with their families about their wishes, a necessary condition for donation.

The coalition is making the Key to Immortality available to anyone who signs a donor card. People interested in obtaining keys may write to: UT Transplant Services Center, 401 Forensic Science Bldg., 5323 Harry Hines, Dallas, TX 75235, or call 214-688-2609. They will be sent a detachable card to keep and a card to return in exchange for a key at no charge.

Coalition members include the American Transplant Association, Baylor University Medical Center at Dallas, Children's Medical Center of Dallas, the Blood Center at Wadley, the Dallas Chapter of American Liver Foundation, the Lions Organ and Eye Bank of District 2-E2, the Lions Sight and Tissue Foundation of District 2-X1, Methodist Medical Center, the National Kidney Foundation of Texas, Parkland Memorial Hospital, St. Paul Medical Center, the Southwest Organ Bank, the Tarrant County Organ Donor Program and Transplant Services Center at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas. Corporate supporters are Southwestern Bell Telephone Co., Sandoz Inc. Pharmaceutical Division and Dallas Transplant Institute.

For further information about the Key to Immortality program, contact may also be made with UT Transplant Services.

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Distribution: AA,AB,AC,AC1,AF,AF1,AG,AG1,AH,AI,AK,AK1,ADM,ADM1,SL

Note: The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas comprises Southwestern Medical School, Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Southwestern Allied Health Sciences School.