

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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A CELEBRATION OF TRANSPLANTATION MEDICINE GIVES THANKS FOR GIFTS OF LIFE AND SIGHT

DALLAS — November 17, 1993 — As the child actor who played "Spanky" in the movies for more than a decade, George Robert Phillips McFarland gave a lot of pleasure to generations of "Our Gang" fans. Although "Spanky" McFarland died of a heart attack last June, he continues to give — as a tissue donor.

"Spanky, who was just months short of his 65th birthday, loved people and always wanted to do what he could to help anyone who needed it," said Doris McFarland, his widow. "That's why he had long planned to be an organ and tissue donor."

Doris McFarland of Keller, and her daughter, Betsy McFarland of Fort Worth, will be among the donor-family members and transplant recipients at a special "Celebration of Thanksgiving for the Gift of Transplantation Medicine" on Sunday, Nov. 21, at 12:30 p.m.

The program, sponsored by The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center's Transplant Services Center, will be held at Thanks-Giving Square in downtown Dallas. Chaplains and medical personnel involved in transplantation medicine will join donor families, recipients and their families and friends. Anyone interested in transplantation medicine is welcome.

Four people benefited from Spanky's ultimate gift. Two can see because of his transplanted corneas, and two others received sclera — the white tissue in the eye — making vital eye surgeries possible.

Betsy McFarland will be one of the speakers at the Thanks-Giving Square celebration.

She remembers when she first signed her driver's license to become an organ and tissue donor herself. "We were all gathered around the dining table for a

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special family occasion, and I announced that I was signing to become a donor. Dad said that he signed a long time ago himself. I felt really good."

Born in Oak Cliff, Spanky modeled children's clothes from the old A. Harris Company, a Dallas department store, and recorded commercials for Wonder Bread. One day his aunt read about a Hollywood search for new child stars, and the family was off to California for the next 13 years.

Spanky left his role as leader of "Our Gang" and returned to Texas with his parents to attend high school in Lancaster. He spent his Army time in Texas as an entertainer. Throughout a second career in business and sales, an interest in golf kept him in touch with many of his Hollywood friends. He became a regular on the charity golf circuit, especially in tournaments benefiting cancer or leukemia.

UT Southwestern's Transplant Services Center grew out of a partnership between the school's pioneering skin bank and the Lions Sight and Tissue Foundation. "Today it is one of the most active tissue banks in the country, supplying North Texas and much of the state with tissue such as corneas, skin, bone, connective tissue, bone marrow, sclera, veins, heart valves and tendons for transplantation," said Ellen Heck, administrative director.

The salute to transplantation medicine will include an original musical tribute by Plano physician Dr. William Swicegood for his colleague in emergency medicine, Dr. Wayne Roop of Plano, who is the recent recipient of a bilateral lung transplant. The Rev. Ronald Somers-Clark, chaplain at Children's Medical Center of Dallas and himself a bone-transplant recipient, will give the invocation.

Members of several Eagle Scout troops and Lions Club chapters will usher.

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