



Writing to the Family of Your Donor: Correspondence Guidelines

It is very thoughtful of you to want to write to the family who made your transplant or your family member's transplant possible. Many families say that a card or personal note from the recipient provides them with comfort in knowing that their loved one's gift made a difference.

Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network is able to facilitate correspondence for transplant recipients and donors' families in Illinois who choose to correspond. Below are guidelines to assist you with writing to your donor's family.

Talk about yourself:

- Use only your first name.
- Include the state (not the city) in which you live.
- Include your age.
- Include your hobbies, interests, job or occupation (no company names).
- Include your family situation, such as marital status, children or grandchildren. (Remember to use only first names.)
- Be sensitive regarding religious comments and views, because your donor family's specific faith is not known.

Talk about your transplant experience:

- Use simple language.
- Describe how long you waited for a transplant and what the wait was like for you and your family.
- Explain how the transplant has improved your health and changed your life.
- Talk about the activities in which you can now participate because of your transplant.
- Explain what has happened in your life since your transplant, e.g., celebrated another birthday or anniversary, got married, became a parent, returned to work or school.

Closing your letter:

- Sign your first name only.
- Do not include your address, city or telephone number.
- Do not reveal the name or location of the hospital or doctor involved with your transplant.

Mailing your letter:

- Place your letter in an unsealed envelope.
- Include a separate piece of paper with your full name, as well as the date and location of your transplant. (This is for Gift of Hope's information.)
- Place these items in another envelope and mail them to Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, Attn: Donor Family Services, 425 Spring Lake Drive Itasca, IL 60143.

Upon receiving your letter, we will review the letter to ensure privacy and then forward it to your donor family.

Will you hear back from your donor family?

You may or may not hear back. Many families have said that writing about their loved one and discussing their decision to donate gives them comfort. Other families—even though they are comfortable with their decision to donate—prefer privacy and choose not to communicate. The family may still be coping with their loss, and individuals manage grief in different ways.

You can also find sample letters and information on how to order special greeting cards free of charge to send to your donor family by visiting www.giftofhope.org. Click on "Donor Families & Recipients," and then click on "Donor Family/Recipient Correspondence." If you have additional questions, please do not

hesitate to contact Gift of Hope Donor Family Services at 630/758-2717. To contact Diane Schmitz, Donor Family Services Coordinator, e-mail her at dschmitz@giftofhope.org.