

Making the Decision to Write

Sometimes donor families choose to write to transplant recipients to share information about themselves and their loved one. The decision to write is a very personal one. For some donor families, this sharing helps them in their grieving process. The choice to write or not to write is completely your own.

The Pacific Northwest Transplant Bank's Family Resource Program assists families with the correspondence process. All letters must remain anonymous until both recipients and donor families have signed release forms granting permission to provide personal information. We forward the letters to the recipient's transplant coordinator, who passes them on to the recipient. This process may take several weeks.

All letters are reviewed to ensure confidentiality.



Correspondence Guidelines

If you decide to write, here are some suggestions.

Provide General Information

- Provide information that you feel comfortable sharing about yourself, your loved one who donated or other family members. This may include occupations, hobbies or interests, special things your loved one liked to do, or nonspecific information about your family.
- You may include a photo of your loved one.
- Sign only your first name.
- Keep identities anonymous and confidential. Do not include any last names, street addresses, city or county names, phone numbers, e-mails, Web sites, specific dates, or names of hospitals or physicians.

After You Have Completed Your Letter

- Place the card or letter in an unsealed envelope.
- Include a separate sheet of paper with your full name and the name and date of death of your loved one.

Mail to:

Pacific Northwest Transplant Bank
Attn.: Family Resource Program
2611 SW Third, Suite 320
Portland, OR 97201-4943

Will the Recipient Write Back?

Some recipients may send a letter or card to you in response to your letter. Other recipients may choose not to write to you at this time for a variety of reasons. Transplant recovery takes time, and sometimes the recipient does not feel well enough to write. Often recipients have a hard time finding the right words to say "thank you" for their second chance at life.

If you do not hear back from a recipient, you may contact the Family Resource Program for a recipient update. We will contact the recipient's transplant social worker/coordinator to see how the recipient is doing and relay the information back to you.



A Donate Life Organization

Letter from a Recipient

“We welcomed your letter with open arms. We could only imagine the pain your family went through during your terrible loss. We are very sorry for the loss that you endured. It saddened us even more because our daughter was the same age.”

“My husband’s biggest goal was to see his only child married. Our daughter was married last Mother’s Day and my husband was in his glory walking her down the aisle. I don’t think there was a dry eye in the room when he danced with her. Thank you doesn’t seem to say enough, but ‘thank you’ for raising a son who knew what his gift would mean to others.”

From Donor Families

“I want to thank you for your letter regarding the donation of my husband’s organs and tissues. I’ve shared the information with my son, my husband’s family, and our friends. It has given us ALL great pleasure to hear that four different lives were affected as a result of our gift. Although that was one of the hardest moments in my life and one of the toughest decisions I’ve ever made, I can tell you that I am so thankful today for making the RIGHT choice. I wish there was a way to advocate this to the world.”

“After saying yes to the question of donating my daughter’s organs, months afterwards I really had reservations. The pain of our loss was more than the joy of sharing. I wondered, was the gift of life given in vain? Until this past week, the question was still in our minds. A beautiful letter which meant so much was sent to us. Pains eased, the joy of sharing became very vivid in our minds. In death as in life, our daughter is helping others. If the same situation happens again, we would not hesitate to share.”



Pacific Northwest Transplant Bank

Family Resource Program
2611 SW Third, Suite 320
Portland, OR 97201-4943
503-494-5560
1-800-452-1369, ext. 45560

Writing to Transplant Recipients

A Guide for the Family Members of Donors

