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Gift of Life Celebration

by *Cynthia Johnston*

Each year the Critical Care Organ Donation program, the Regional Tissue Bank and the Provincial Legacy of Life program hosts a “Gift of Life” celebration to recognize the generosity and courage of those individuals and their families who have donated organs and tissues for transplantation. During their darkest hours, after the loss of a loved one the families chose to selflessly give the “Gift of Life” to help someone they do not even know.

This year the celebration was an opportunity to share stories, reminisce, laugh and cry but most of all, honor their loved ones legacy and provide support to donor families.

Families spoke about “giving the gift”, and what it has meant to them. Recipients spoke about receiving that gift and how it has greatly impacted and touched their lives and

mostly, how grateful they are that during a time of loss someone considered donation. Front line health care professionals spoke to families explaining both the sorrow and reward they feel going through the process with families. The last portion of the celebration is dedicated to passing out Gift of Life medallions to families, honoring each Organ and Tissue Donor one at a time. For the families it was truly a salute to their loved one.

This ceremony has a profound impact on healthcare professionals. It helps them truly understand the impact of the work they do all year.

Over time the celebration has become larger, the technologies more advanced but the core value of selfless giving and the human spirit has never been lost.

Fran Calnan Retires

It is with mixed emotions we announce the retirement of Fran Calnan, Administrative Assistant for Legacy of Life.

We want to thank-you for all of your support over the years – you have made many great contributions to the success of the Legacy of Life Program. We will always be grateful for all your efforts and wish you all the best in this new chapter of your life.

PARTNER UPDATES

The theme for Transplant Atlantic 2015 is “Delivering Quality Care”. Mark your calendars for November 10th at the Lord Nelson Hotel in Halifax for this year’s conference which is shaping up to have a great line up of presenters. Registration is now open at www.motpatlantic.ca.

DID YOU KNOW?

Janet Evans will return to her position as Organ and Tissue Donation Resource Nurse at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital on October 6, 2015.

Janet can be reached at janet.evans@nshealth.ca.

The Legacy of Life Program has relocated.

The new address is:
1673 Bedford Row, Room 2123
Halifax, NS B3J 1T1
(902) 487-0514

Cynthia Isenor is the Health Services Manager for both the Critical Care Organ Donation Program and the 5.2 Medical Surgical Neuro Intensive Care Unit at the Halifax Infirmary. Prior to coming to the Nova Scotia Health Authority, she worked in Ontario for Trillium Gift of Life Network; Ontario’s Organ Procurement Organization. Cynthia was an integral member of the group responsible for the development and implementation of both the province of Ontario’s and St. Michael Hospital’s Donation after Cardio-circulatory Death program. Her most recent focus revolved around the program development and implementation for expansion of donation programs to all of Ontario’s level I critical care hospitals. Cynthia has been a critical care nurse for over fourteen years and received her Master of Science in Nursing at York University; where she focused on educational modalities to improve uptake of information. Cynthia is excited to return to her home province of Nova Scotia and has a keen interest in working within the organ and tissue donation programs here.



Cynthia Isenor, Health Services Manager, Critical Care Organ Donation Program



Around THE PROVINCE

Public Awareness - Reaching Out to Rural Nova Scotia

On April 13, 2015 a public gala was held in Amherst, Nova Scotia to celebrate Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness. Dr. Jean Legare, a renowned Heart Transplant Surgeon, was the keynote speaker for the event. Dr. Legare and Manu Saraswat, Dalhousie University student, presented on heart transplantation along with new advancements in technology that allows patients to experience an increased quality of life as they await heart transplant. Dr. Legare also provided insight into both kidney and liver transplants as well as stem cell research.

Transplant recipients and patients currently waiting for a transplant were among the 60 participants. There is an active volunteer group associated with the community in Cumberland County that works diligently to promote organ and tissue donation awareness. These volunteers are all recipients of a kidney, liver or bone marrow transplant and work tirelessly, with great enthusiasm and commitment to giving back to the community they live in and to help others who may be waiting for a transplant.

During the month of April, for Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, many community events are held to highlight organ and tissue donation. These community awareness events help reach those in outlying rural areas and the positive feedback has been very encouraging.

DONOR FAMILY RECOGNITION



Breanna Michelle and dog Shiloh

My daughter Breanna Michelle was a beautiful girl, both inside and out. She was our youngest child of three. She shared a very special relationship with her two older brothers, Brent and Scott. Breanna was what one would call “an ole soul” at a young age. She loved having a great time with her circle of friends and loved taking things in at every family gathering.

At the age of 17, Breanna had the world by the tail. In September she was to enter grade twelve, she worked at Subway part-time throughout the school year and full time during the summer months. Bre was simply enjoying life.

Unfortunately, all of this came to a tragic end on August 20, 2013. Breanna

and a couple of her friends were heading to New Glasgow to take in a movie when the vehicle she was driving hit loose gravel and resulted in a head-on collision. It was on this day that our world changed forever.

Although we lost our baby girl in this tragedy, we know she lives on. I can’t recall the specific date, but I remember filling out the form to renew Bre’s NS Health card. As I was reading through,

I asked her if she’d be interested in becoming a tissue and organ donor. With just a brief discussion on this, Bre’s response was, “Sure, why not?” So, with a checkmark in the appropriate box, Breanna became a donor. With her tissue donations, we know our girl

has helped to give a number of tissue recipients a better quality of life. Our beautiful Bre lives on in the lives of others through yet another of her selfless acts.

In 2014, as a family, we began hosting an annual golf tournament in memory of our Breanna. For the past two years we have also tried to incorporate the importance of being a donor within our tournament. On Hole #9, we display a six-foot high donor ribbon with our daughter’s picture, we have information booklets about being a donor and each golfer gets pinned with a donor pin. If only one person signs his/her health card, we have been successful.

by Karen Lundrigan

NATIONAL PROSPECTIVE



Dr. Sam Shemie will present to the IWK community on November 10th while in Halifax for the Transplant Atlantic conference.

Dr. Sam Shemie is a physician in the Division of Pediatric Critical Care, and Medical Director, Extracorporeal Life Support Program at Montreal Children's Hospital, McGill University Health Centre.

Dr. Shemie is also Professor of Pediatrics, McGill University and holds the Bertram Loeb Chair in Organ and Tissue Donation, Faculty of Arts, University of Ottawa. Dr. Shemie is also Medical Director (Donation), Organs and Tissues, Canadian Blood Services.

Dr. Shemie's area of specialty is organ replacement in critical illness. He is a paediatric critical care physician and director of Extracorporeal Life Support program at the Montreal Children's Hospital, McGill University. His recent research interests have included the development and implementation of national ICU based organ donation strategies. He is the former chair of the Donation Committee of the Canadian Council for Donation and Transplantation. ■

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

The Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) eLearning site, located at <https://elearning.nshealth.ca/> provides healthcare workers throughout the province with easy access to the ongoing learning and training needed to maintain skill competency.

The Learning Management System (LMS) delivers self-paced online courses, exams and surveys through the Internet. This makes training available regardless of where in the province learners are located, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

As of September 9, 2015, there have been 515 completions of the Human Organ and Tissue Donation Act (HOTDA) module. ■

ORGAN AND TISSUE CONTACTS



www.legacyoflife.ns.ca

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Critical Care Organ Donation
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