

## Transplant Recipient Urges County People to Sign Organ Donor Cards



Pastor Ian Robb says one of the first things he did during his six month-long recuperation and rehabilitation following his double lung transplant three years ago was to sign his organ donor card.

"It was really the least I could do," says the Milford area transplant recipient, who, in the year 2000 suffered from Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) and associated complications which irreversibly damaged his lungs. "Before this happened to me, I couldn't have shown you an organ donor card."

Pastor Ian was one of the lucky ones. Every three days, one person in CANADA will die awaiting a transplant. More than 4,000 Canadians and 1,866 Ontarians are on waiting lists for various organ transplants yet only three million Canadians have signed their organ donor cards. That's something Pastor Ian and the **Trillium Gift of Life Network**, the province's central organ and tissue donation agency hope to change one donor card at a time. During National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, this week of April 23-29, Kingston General Hospital and Hotel Dieu Hospital will have organ donor cards and information pamphlets on organ and tissue donation in their main lobbies.

Signing your organ donor card, however, is just the beginning, says Gail-Anne Harris, organ donation coordinator based at KGH. People who sign organ donor cards need to make their families aware of their wish to donate their organs so there is little misunderstanding at the time of potential donation. "Almost 75 per cent of Ontarians would be willing to accept an organ or tissue transplant; however, fewer than half have signed their donor card. We need to improve that by encouraging people to talk about their wishes," Harris says. "Awareness is integral to the donation process. People must discuss with their families

their decision to donate because next of kin must consent to organ donation upon their loved one's passing, even if an organ donor card has been signed."

One donor can provide up to six organs: heart, lungs, liver, pancreas, kidneys and small bowel, while they may also provide tissue donations such as corneas and heart valves. As one of 13 hospitals in Ontario with a regional trauma and/or neurosurgical program, KGH has the potential to facilitate the entire donation process on site, including surgical recovery, and has performed many kidney and corneal transplants.

Like the organ and tissue co-ordination team at KGH, Pastor Ian wants to help get the word out to as many people as he can, including those considering transplantation. He has spent the last couple of years speaking out about the importance of organ donation around the region. Pastor Ian says one of the greatest challenges for transplant recipients, both mentally and physically, is going through lengthy and rigorous preparations with no guarantee that a suitable organ/s will be found

"You go through this incredible journey, this roller coaster of a ride, and yet you still don't know if an acceptable organ will become available. It now becomes a 'what if' and I'd like to help remove that 'what if' for people awaiting transplant," says Pastor Ian, who, in 2004, along with a small group of fellow transplant recipients created: **ONTARIO EAST TRANSPLANT SUPPORT GROUP** ([www.pastorian.com](http://www.pastorian.com)) to offer support to pre and post transplant recipients. "Organ donation is the most phenomenal gift you can ever give anyone. How many people can say they have truly saved someone else's life? Out of tragedy, you can give this incredible offer of LIFE, but you need to sign your organ donor card, and you need to speak with your family."

What you have just read is the Press release I helped to prepare in conjunction with Kingston General Hospital. In

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