

## Alabama Organ Center Writing to Donor Families

### **I wonder how my donor's family is doing? How do I find out?**

Contact between a donor family and a recipient family is limited by the Alabama Organ Center rules of confidentiality and privacy for all participants in the donation process. If both parties agree, written contact is accomplished by an exchange of letters through the Donor Family Liaison, who acts as a third party. All correspondence is anonymous and identities are confidential... **SIGN ONLY YOUR FIRST NAME.** Keep identities anonymous and confidential by not including any last names, street addresses, city names, phone numbers, names of hospitals, physicians and do not include your e-mail address. **ALL LETTERS WILL BE SCREENED TO ENSURE CONFIDENTIALITY AND APPROPRIATENESS.** If there is a concern with your letter, I will contact you; so please make sure I have your contact information available. If you wish to send a card, letter or picture; you may send it to the address below. Please, always write in pen.

### **I'd like to thank them for my "gift of life." What should I say?**

Always begin your letter with an acknowledgement of their profound loss. Then, write about information that you feel comfortable sharing about yourself, the nature of your illness, how long you waited for your transplant and how the transplant has affected your health, life and family. Tell them how much this second chance means to you. Feel free to discuss your occupation, hobbies or interests, perhaps special things you enjoy and information about your family. If you can't put your feelings into words, look for a card that expresses your sentiment. What is important is that you write them. Donor families appreciate just hearing 'Thank You.'

### **Will the donor family respond to my letter?**

For some families, an opportunity to hear from the recipient about their transplant experience is appreciated. Other families, however, feel unable to express their emotion adequately on paper. There is no guarantee, therefore, that you will receive a response. The timing of a reply will vary with individual circumstances. You may receive a response quickly or perhaps later in the future. Please do not feel that your expression of interest is unwelcome. Your concern for these people who profoundly affected your life is greatly appreciated.

Since some of the donor families live a great distance away, please allow several weeks for the exchange of correspondence to occur.

Holidays are busy times for correspondence. PLEASE SEND ALL HOLIDAY MAIL ONE MONTH PRIOR TO THE HOLIDAY.

### **How do I mail my letter?**

1. With your letter, on a **SEPARATE** sheet of paper include either the **CHART NUMBER ABOVE or YOUR NAME, DATE OF TRANSPLANT AND THE ORGAN YOU RECEIVED. WITHOUT EITHER OF THESE, I CAN NOT IDENTIFY WHO YOUR DONOR FAMILY IS.**

2. Mail your letter with identifying information to:  
Carrie Ellis, BA, MHS  
Aftercare Coordinator  
Alabama Organ Center  
421 Richard Arrington Blvd South  
Birmingham, AL 35233  
800.252.3677  
cellis@alabamaorgancenter.org