

HEROES



Kathy Schmelzle

“My Uncle Wally died very unexpectedly. He was the type of person who never showed emotion to something negative that bothered him. My mom has said several times, ‘He was the wealthiest man with friends, but he just didn’t know it.’ I have heard this numerous times within the past month and a half. His death made my family and I understand what is meant by the expression, ‘It took my breath away.’ With his death, over 50 different people were helped. How was this possible you may ask? It was possible because my mother made the decision of donating Wally’s tissues. She donated everything she could so that something good could come of this tragedy. People die every day, sometimes very unexpectedly. Have you ever thought about being a donor? Personally, I have thought of this quite a bit lately. There are so many people: parents, grandparents and children who wait on a list for months, maybe years, to receive a donated organ so that they can live.

There are benefits of becoming an organ or tissue donor. The strongest benefit of being a donor is the fact that people’s lives can be saved. Just think, you could help over 50 people like my uncle did. Yes, his death was unexpected, but in my opinion, everyone should have the chance to live like everyone else; no matter if they are sick. Some children are born with an illness and never have the chance to live a normal life because of the shortage of donors. These children may not be able to experience going on their first date, playing football or basketball for school or even enjoying the simple everyday life with friends.

Once a person decides to be an organ or tissue donor, there are many ways to accomplish this. You can sign up to be a donor when you receive your driver’s license and the donor symbol will be placed on your license. Some of you may have already done this; I know I have. It is very important to let your family know your wishes. Children should talk to their parents. Telling your family that you would like to be an organ and tissue donor might not be easy. You should explain to them that you will be giving over 50 people a second chance at living. Another good idea is to have your family learn more about donation.”

The above story is an excerpt from a [persuasive speech written by Kathy Schmelzle](#) in April 2003. On April 19, 2005, the unthinkable happened; Kathy died in a motorcycle/tractor accident about a half mile from her home. Kathy’s decision about organ donation was honored and she became a donor: the very thing she felt so strongly about was now hers. Her parents will tell you, there is no way to describe the pain of losing a child. There is also no way to describe the awe in realizing how many lives your child has touched while alive and through donation.

Pat and Patty Schmelzle and family, established a scholarship with the STEP Foundation in memory of their daughter Kathy. Kathy had a great love and compassion for kids and had a desire to teach since the first grade. She had plans to attend Emporia State University and enter the field of special education. Kathy’s family started this scholarship for students pursuing a degree in education so that Kathy could go on teaching. The family also created the Donate Life Globe. Kathy’s story continues to this day through the Globe, reaching and informing people about organ, eye and tissue donation; the need to make and document your decision; and the need to talk to your family about your decision. The Donate Life Globe represents true Heroes: the donors and their families.

Step up and be someone’s hero. Say YES!