

Donating yourself



The WordchipperSM

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Bob Aronson, a Minnesota Iron Range native from Hibbing, was host of WDAY Radio's first call-in talk show, "Viewpoint," back in the 1970s. He now lives in Jacksonville, FL, where he had a heart transplant at the Mayo Clinic there, two-and-a-half years ago. Bob writes a column for the WDAY alumni newsletter, which I edit and publish monthly. Recently, he wrote of his views on organ donations and gave us his permission and encouragement to share them with you.

BOB WRITES: My new heart came from a 35-year-old stranger. Without it I would have died within a few months. As of this writing there are 105,000 people on the national organ waiting list. 82,000 of them are waiting for kidneys (<http://optn.transplant.hrsa.gov/>). A new name is added to the organ waiting list every 11 minutes. A million more suffer from blindness, medical conditions or devastating injuries that can be successfully treated with donated corneas or tissue.

You would think that with 300-plus million people in this country there would be more than enough organs and tissue to save or enhance all of those lives. The fact is that while 90 percent of Americans believe in organ donation, barely 35 percent take the time to register. That means that each year more and more people are dying because of a lack of organs, nearly eighteen people die each day while waiting, and there are more than 2,600 people waiting in the upper Midwest. These deaths are totally unnecessary. One organ donor can save or affect the lives of up to sixty people—**sixty people!** It must be said, though, that North Dakota and Minnesota are way above the national average. The donation rate in Minnesota is 51 percent and in North Dakota it is 65 percent. You are really showing your sincerity and compassion. Now we need you to spread the word.



Bob Aronson

Good intentions are not enough. If you want to pay more than lip service to the issue, go to www.lifeforce.org and you will immediately discover how you can register. *LifeSource* is the regional coordinator of

organ and tissue donation and transplantation. I know them well. Their commitment and dedication are well known to all in the donation/transplantation community. If you are not a computer person, call *LifeSource* toll-free: 888-5-DONATE; they will be happy to help you.

Whether you are a registered donor or not, talk to everyone you know about organ and tissue donation. There is no act that is nobler.

There are a multitude of questions about organ donation but here are the answers to just a few:

1. What can be donated? Organs: Heart, lungs, kidneys, pancreas, liver and intestines. **Tissue:** Corneas, skin, veins, tendons, bone, heart valves and connective tissue.

2. Should age or health affect my decision to be a donor? No. Almost everyone can save lives through donation!

3. Will my family have to pay for the cost of my organ and/or tissue donation? There is no cost to the donor family for donation.

4. Can the rich and famous jump the list based on their celebrity status? No.

There are many more questions, and the answers can be found by calling *LifeSource* or visiting their website.

I am alive because of the generosity of a total stranger, but there are so many just like me who will probably die waiting. If every person who became a donor would convince just one other person to do the same, there would be no shortage and we could stop the dying.

If you would like more information, you can read my blogs on the subject at bobsnewheart.wordpress.com or visit my Facebook site, "Organ Transplant Patients, Families and Friends" at <http://tinyurl.com/225cfh>.

Thanks for your insights, information and plea for organ donations, Bob. And I'm so glad you were one of the fortunate ones who received the heart they needed. No doubt your efforts will make a difference in many other lives. Keep up your work on behalf of this vital cause.