When Sandy King checked the organ donor box on her driver’s license, she never dreamed she would become a living donor and save the life of a young boy she’d never met, let alone the unusual set of circumstances that led her to give this amazing gift.

Cooper Goble, the son of Chris and Keri Goble of Tulsa, was diagnosed at birth with Posterior Urethral Valves, a congenital condition that caused urine to back up into his kidneys. The urine saturated his kidneys and prevented them from developing correctly. “From the beginning we were told that Cooper would eventually require a transplant,” Keri says. “The pediatric nephrologist and urologist were able to salvage partial function in one kidney, which bought enough time for Cooper to get to a minimum transplant weight, 22 pounds.”

Over time, as the doctors had cautioned the Goble’s in the beginning, Cooper’s kidneys began to fail - he would need a kidney transplant. “Cooper was put on the waiting list and from then on it was just a ‘wait and see’ kind of thing to see if anyone was the correct match. It was more limiting since he was a small child and needed the donor not to exceed a certain size,” Chris explains. In the meantime, to help keep Cooper’s kidneys functioning properly, he was put on peritoneal dialysis.

Cooper had become accustomed to being hooked up to medical devices, so the dialysis machine seemed routine to him. “He coped pretty well, he didn’t really know anything different since he had had problems since birth,” Keri remembers. “He was just so young.”

Meanwhile, Chris had shared his son’s story with co-worker, Anita Reed. The story touched Anita so much that she wanted to help and be a donor for three-year-old Cooper. Unfortunately Anita was not a match for Cooper.

Realizing her sister Sandy King had type O blood, Anita paid her an unexpected visit.

“She came to the company I worked for crying and asked if I would consider being a donor for him,” Sandy recalls.

Sandy knew immediately she wanted to help. Without hesitation she went home to discuss the situation with her husband. “We prayed about it. I knew in my heart it was the right thing to do,” Sandy says.

Sandy proceeded for the next six months with the required testing to determine if she was a match for Cooper.
“SAY YES OKLAHOMA!”
We’ve heard it on the radio, seen it on television and read it in newspapers. But more importantly, Oklahomans in 2003 and 2004 have responded and said “yes” to organ and tissue donation in record numbers. In 2004 alone, 92 individuals and/or families said yes to organ donation and in the process provided a second chance to 239 individuals whose very lives depended on that simple but powerful word, “Yes”. Five hundred and twenty-eight families said yes to tissue donation, and in so doing provided improved health for literally thousands of individuals suffering with a broad range of physical ailments. There is tremendous power for saving lives and restoring health in that single word “Yes”!

There are other factors in the success of organ, eye and tissue donation. Shelly Brady-Koontz and her Global Organization for Organ Donation (GOOD) partnered with LifeShare to make it possible for families to share, through tributes and testimonials, the qualities that made their loved ones so special. The Tulsa World and Oklahoman newspapers, by sponsoring the GOOD Circle of Life Program, have kept the need for organ and tissue donation constantly before their readers. Together they have played a major role in recent successes resulting in the lives of more Oklahomans being saved.

Another key component of recent success is the outstanding support for organ and tissue donation among Oklahoma hospitals. A number of hospitals have sent staff members to participate in the Breakthrough Collaborative on Organ and Tissue Donation sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. At the Collaborative, best practices from around the country were shared and hospitals were challenged to become important partners in saving lives through donation. Oklahoma hospitals have accepted the challenge. For this, we at LifeShare are grateful.

The Oklahoma Legislature has also played a role in saving lives through passage of legislation encouraging organ and tissue donation. The Organ Donor Education and Awareness Program Act, passed five years ago, has proven a key to success by creating a Donor Awareness Fund to which Oklahomans have, since November of 2000, contributed over $850,000 while making application for driver’s licenses and vehicle titles, or through the tax check-off on their Oklahoma Income Tax Return. These monies have made possible the creation of a new brochure that is distributed by tag agents, another key support group for organ donation, and the funding of radio, television and print advertising campaigns promoting donation.

The new LifeShare Donor Registry that went on line in April of last year, represents another important contribution by the state legislature, as well as the Departments of Health and Public Safety which have spent many hours working out the details of transferring names from the DPS database to the Registry. This transfer is now days away and will make first-person consent (another important legislative effort) a reality in Oklahoma.

But when all is said and done, if lives are to be saved, if health is to be restored, it still depends on the compassion and good will of individual Oklahomans and their loved ones. Thank you to all who have said “Yes”. And remember, when you renew your driver license, become a part of the LifeShare Donor Registry. Say “Yes” Oklahoma!

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SIBLINGS CELEBRATE TRANSPLANT AFTER FOUR DECADES
On June 15, 1965, Jim Knight gave his sister Katherine his left kidney in what was the 47th kidney transplant to take place in the United States and one of the first to take place in Minnesota. Although they are not twins, the kidney is still working well 40 years later. Katherine received her brother’s kidney when she was 28. Jim was chosen because he was the only sibling who was still single.

HARVARD LOOKS AT INTERNET ORGAN DONOR SOLICITATIONS
Harvard University Medical School recently hosted a conference to examine the ethics of using the Internet to solicit donors. Much of the discussion centered around the use of the MatchingDonors.com web site. A report is expected to be released later this year.

NKF SEEKS BETTER MEDICARE COVERAGE FOR ANTI-REJECTION DRUGS
The National Kidney Foundation says that Medicare now covers immunosuppressive drugs for three years after kidney transplantation, except for patients who meet Medicare age or disability requirements. Coverage extends to the life of the transplant for those patients. NKF says these costly medications average between $1,200 and $1,500 monthly, an unbearable expense for many. The NKF says coverage needs to be expanded.
A Stranger’s Gift
continued from page 1

She was very excited to find out she would be able to give Cooper a kidney.

“Being a mother of two myself, I knew how much it would mean to Chris and Keri.”

Having never met Sandy and her family, the Gobles hosted a cookout to celebrate the good news and meet the woman they would soon call Cooper’s Guardian Angel.

July 18, 2002, Sandy gave Cooper and his family the most precious gift one can give, the gift of life.

The surgery was a success. Cooper's healthy new kidney has put an end to his suffering. He can go to bed at night without the ever-present medical machines that once dominated his life.

Sandy and the Gobles continue to stay connected through e-mail and occasional lunches and Keri’s grandmother sends Sandy cards every holiday.

This experience has not only touched the lives of Sandy and the Gobles, it has also provided an up close look at organ donation for Sandy’s two teenaged children. “I’m glad my children have been exposed to it and the sense of joy that comes with it,” Sandy explains. Having seen their mother’s compassion for a stranger, and the effects it had on his family, Sandy’s children were compelled to become registered donors themselves.

“I encourage everyone to be a donor, you can change lives of not just individuals, but whole families,” says Sandy.

“I never thought of not doing it. If you saw a child drowning you would jump in and try to help,” Sandy explains. “As I have spoken to others about the experience, I have found that most have a heart to help people. I feel in my heart that the Lord ordered my steps and put me at the right place at the right time,” Sandy says. “It was my honor and has truly been a blessing.”

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LifeShare Donor Registry Includes More Than One-Third of All Oklahomans

W hen the LifeShare Donor Registry gains access to the names of all Oklahomans who say they want to be an organ, eye and tissue donor, the names of one in three Oklahomans will be in the database.

“We have completed negotiations with the Oklahoma State Department of Health and the Department of Public Safety, on how the information will be transferred and protected,” says LifeShare Executive Director Robert Turner. “The contracts have been signed and we look forward to being able to access this lifesaving information as soon as possible.”

Both LifeShare and the Department of Public Safety realized the need for the secure transfer of the information, and limited access to the data by employees who have received strict security clearances. Procedures ensuring confidentiality of the information will be in place before the more than 1.2 million names are transmitted to the registry.

“What’s exciting about having a fully functional registry,” says Phil Van Stavern, director of communications for LifeShare, “is that we can determine in minutes whether someone intended to be a donor, taking the burden of making that decision from the family. In the past, it took hours, or in most cases we never knew, and the potential donor’s next of kin was then left to make that difficult decision.”

Once it has been determined that a potential donor had registered his/her wishes to be an organ, eye and tissue donor in the LifeShare Donor Registry, that registration is considered legal consent for donation. It is LifeShare’s policy, if the potential donor is medically suitable, that it will follow the law and ensure that the donor’s wish is honored.

In addition to recording the desire to be a donor on the driver’s license or state ID card, the LifeShare Donor Registry features online registration at www.lifeshareregistry.org. Oklahomans without internet access can call 800-826-LIFE and request that a donor registration card be sent to them. All are valid ways to join the LifeShare Donor Registry.
The generosity of donors and their families is truly unmatched. As many recipients will tell you, there are hardly words to express their gratitude for the lifesaving gift they have been given. Sometimes, “Thank you”, just doesn’t seem to be enough.

Because, most often it takes the loss of a loved one to give the gift of life to another, LifeShare Transplant Donor Services of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Lions Eye Bank, in August, will recognize and honor those who unselfishly chose organ, eye or tissue donation, at the annual Donor Recognition Ceremony.

“It is a humbling experience,” says LifeShare Executive Director Robert Turner, “when hundreds of individuals come together to remember their loved ones, to be recognized for their compassion and generosity, and to associate with others who, like themselves, have turned loss into hope for others.”

At the Donor Recognition Ceremony, in addition to the opportunity to bring a quilt square to be made a part of Oklahoma’s Donor Family Quilt, each family will be given a specially created memory box in which they can put photographs and other mementos. Families are also invited to submit tributes and a photograph for the LifeShare Memory Book. During the ceremonies, as family members pin their quilt square to the quilt, a picture of their loved one is displayed on a screen. This experience, which is intended to be a moment of healing, has proven to be a highlight for many families.

“It is a real privilege to work with each of these donor families,” LifeShare Donor Family Services Coordinator Julie Avants explains. “The Donor Recognition Ceremonies are a way for us to honor and recognize the selfless act of kindness their loved one bestowed upon another.”

This year’s featured speaker is Chet Zuber, who brings with him a unique perspective on donation and transplantation. Mr. Zuber was on the transplant list awaiting a heart, when his daughter received fatal injuries in an automobile accident. After arriving at the hospital and learning of their daughter’s death, the Zubers gave consent for organ donation without hesitation. It was only later, after a preliminary donor workup was done, that Chet Zuber was found to be a suitable recipient for her heart. Though at first reluctant to even consider the idea, Chet later decided to accept the gift of life from his daughter. It is easy to understand why Chet Zuber, with an experience like virtually no one else, is a compelling speaker on the subjects of donation and transplantation.

“I am honored to be speaking at the Donor Recognition Ceremonies, where I will have a chance to thank these donors and their families for the good that they have done,” Chet says.

For more information or to register to be an organ, eye and tissue donor you register your intentions with LifeShare of Oklahoma. There are three ways to reverse your decision: Consent Law your family will be notified of your intent to be a donor, but will not be able to be a registered donor: Say Yes! when obtaining or renewing your driver’s license/state ID card, register on-line at www.lifeshareregistry.org or call 800-826-LIFE.
During the 2004 legislative session unique “Donate Life” license plates were created. These specialty plates are designed to help raise awareness for organ, eye and tissue donation.

“As a liver recipient, getting the message to the public about making a decision regarding organ donation is very important to me,” Amy Tippett explains. “I enjoy looking at car tags as I sit in traffic, and I think there are many others that do the same. I hope that I am able to spark someone’s interest about having a discussion about organ donation by sporting a Donate Life car tag.”

The cost of each plate is $15 with a $2 mail fee. All orders and payments must be made to the Oklahoma Tax Commission.

Amy Tippett, a LifeShare employee, proudly promotes organ, eye and tissue donation with her Donate Life license plate.

HOW TO ORDER YOUR “DONATE LIFE” LICENSE PLATE:

- Download an order form from www.lifeshareoklahoma.org or call 800-826-LIFE to receive a form by standard mail.
- Complete the entire form, following all the instructions.
- Select the “Organ, Eye and Tissue Donor” option, fourth from the bottom.
- Mail the form with payment to: Oklahoma Tax Commission Motor Vehicle Division, Special Plate Section 2501 Lincoln Boulevard Oklahoma City, OK 73194

Become a LifeShare Workplace Partner

Because he believed the workplace is a great environment to create awareness for organ, eye and tissue donation, former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tommy Thompson, initiated the Workplace Partnership for Life program. This program continues today with the support of the new Secretary of Health and Human Services, Mike Leavitt.

The Workplace Partnership program is designed to create awareness of the need for organ, eye and tissue donors. This program empowers employees to make an informed decision about organ donation, and to talk with others about this lifesaving decision.

It is important to educate yourself about organ, eye and tissue donation and if you decide to become a donor, it is imperative that you register and discuss your decision with your family.

“There are still too many mothers and daughters, and fathers and sons, who are waiting for their life-saving gift,” Secretary Leavitt said. “While we are making record-breaking progress in organ and tissue donation, too many opportunities to donate are missed each year.”

LifeShare Workplace Partners are asked to host at least one educational activity each year. Activities can be as simple as sending an e-mail to all employees educating them on organ donation or hosting a donor registration drive. Partnership materials are provided at no cost to our Workplace Partners and may include speakers, donor registration booths, brochures, paycheck inserts, and posters.

This is a unique, no-cost, lifesaving program, in which employers and employees can work together to help save lives. One donor has the potential to save up to seven lives through organ donation and improve the lives of 50 more through eye and tissue donation.

“I am heartened that the promise of organ donation continues to save more and more lives every year,” Secretary Leavitt said. “For each life saved, hope, for others in need, grows; we must continue to grow and share that hope across the nation.”

The number of Oklahomans waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant now exceeds 500, and more than 88,000 are waiting nationwide. Hundreds more await eye and tissue donations.

When a company or organization becomes a LifeShare Workplace Partner, they create goodwill within their community and pride in their employees. For more information or to sign up to be a Workplace Partner please visit www.lifeshareoklahoma.org or call Rachel Klein at 888-580-5680 ext. 109.
CELEBRATING A SECOND CHANCE

As part of Oklahoma Donate Life Month, as proclaimed by Governor Brad Henry this April, donor families, recipients and their families and transplant professionals came together in the annual Second Chance events in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Second Chance is a celebration of life honoring donors, and it’s a chance for recipients to acknowledge the unique gift of a second chance at life.

The 6th Annual Second Chance Family Picnic, held at the Sportsman’s Country Club in Oklahoma City, drew more than 500 donor families, recipients and their families on April 17th for a special time of sharing and bonding. One donor family member called it a kind of “family reunion”.

In Tulsa, on April 22nd, donor families and recipients joined the news media at All Star Sports Complex, for the 12th Annual Second Chance Celebrity Softball Game. Those who attended were able to see transplant recipients, who before had difficulty even walking, actually run the bases. The point of the game, said one recipient family, was “to get the message out that transplants really work, thanks to the generosity of our donors.”
“Say Yes! Oklahoma” was a phrase everyone heard many times during Decision Week 2004, the biggest awareness campaign of the year, a time when families come together to celebrate Thanksgiving.

Capping off a second consecutive record-setting year for donation, LifeShare of Oklahoma mounted another multi-media campaign designed to educate Oklahomans about the need to register to be a donor and share their decision with family members.

Television spots featured five recipients in four different ads. Each held a picture frame with a photograph of a donor. Each of the recipients shared their gratitude at having been saved by an organ donor and urged Oklahomans to register when they get their driver’s license, or by going online at www.lifeshareregistry.org.

Several thousand radio spots, heard statewide, also urged every Oklahoman to “Say Yes” to sharing their lives by registering to be a donor.

More than 660,000 newspaper inserts were placed in Thanksgiving Day editions of 27 daily newspapers and two African-American weeklies. The 8-page inserts featured organ, eye and tissue donor and recipient stories, as well as information on how to register to be a donor and how to contribute to the Oklahoma Donor Education and Awareness Program revolving fund, which made the printing and insertion of the publication possible.

Phil Van Stavern, director of marketing and communication for LifeShare, says that the campaign reached most adult Oklahomans with the lifesaving message of organ, eye and tissue donation between November 21st and December 16th. More than 97% of households, 1.2 million, in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa metro areas were reached by the LifeShare television spots, and more than 900,000 heard the message on radio.

“With a new donor registry in place,” says Van Stavern, “we felt it was crucial to educate Oklahomans about how to register and what the registry will mean in our effort to save the lives of Oklahomans. We think the campaign went a long way toward helping us reach that goal.”
The hale and hearty, young and old, male and female came out to Lake Hefner in large numbers to support organ, eye and tissue donation and to kick the New Year off right with a brisk 8K run in the 2005 edition of Run for Your Life. The race was moved to the lake temporarily because the event had grown so large that the previous location couldn’t accommodate all the runners who wanted to take part.

The nearly 500 runners began the annual New Year’s Day race at Stars and Stripes park. Despite cool temperatures and a winter wind, the runners had a great time. LifeShare staff members and volunteers, many of them donor family members and organ, eye and tissue recipients, kept the race events running smoothly throughout the morning.

The overall winner in the male category was Kevin Schwab of Mustang, with an 8K time of 27:32. The female overall winner was Jane Hadad, who finished the race with a time of 33:41. Each of the winners in a major category received a champagne flute with the Run for Your Life 2005 logo engraved on it.

The event also featured a one mile fun run for kids and adults who did not want to run the 8K race. The one mile overall male winner was Mitch Bertrem and the overall female winner was Ciara Mitchell.

The event ended as it will every year, with a traditional New Year’s Day meal of black-eyed peas and cornbread.

The Tulsa version of Run for Your Life will be back for 2006. The event will begin as it did in 2004 near the Harweldon Mansion just off Riverside Drive and will feature a new race course. LifeShare Special Events/Volunteer Coordinator Tammye Green also says Run for Your Life in Oklahoma City will return to Bricktown with a new course along the beautiful Oklahoma River trails. “We knew that the runners had come to enjoy running the race in Bricktown,” Green says, “so we knew we had to bring it back. Next year will be bigger and better than ever.”

Kevin Schwab, a fifteen year-old from Mustang won the race in 27:32.
TO THE WIFE OF MY DONOR:

My name is Robert and I’m 59 years old. I have been married to the same person for forty-one years. We have three children, two boys and one girl, and five grandchildren. I received a heart transplant on Oct. 26, 2003, and I have been informed that your husband was the donor.

I received a letter from you several weeks ago and I have been slow in responding because I don’t quite know what to say, but I will make the attempt now.

He loved to build things and was learning chainsaw sculpture and locksmithing. He was thirsty for knowledge. He read constantly. He liked to fish! Mostly he liked to eat fish!

I could go on forever about Donn. We had a wonderful life together, although we were only married four years. He adored my children and they felt the same way about him. He gave my daughter away at her wedding three weeks before he died. It was one of the happiest days of his life.

The most important thing I wanted to tell you is that he loved to help people. He wanted to be an organ donor. We had talked about it so many times. And, he would tell you himself not to ever feel bad or feel guilty about having his heart. He would be so thrilled to know he could help you! I can hear him now saying “take it and use it! I want you to have it.”

If you would like to know more about Donn, I would be so happy to tell you. You are so blessed to have the heart of such a wonderful man. I have prayed to know the person who received that wonderful heart, and many people we know here are the same. I only learned about you today, or I would have written sooner. I pray for you daily that you will recover and be strong and healthy. You will be on our prayer list at church as well. Prayer works, we have all seen it. I hope you will contact me and that we can speak over the phone or in person. I will be praying for you.

God bless you,
Lyn Martin
Donor Wife

Several weeks later, Robert Pennington, who received Donn Martin’s heart, responded:

TO THE WIFE OF MY DONOR:

My name is Robert and I’m 59 years old. I have been married to the same person for forty-one years. We have three children, two boys and one girl, and five grandchildren. I received a heart transplant on Oct. 26, 2003, and I have been informed that your husband was the donor.

I received a letter from you several weeks ago and I have been slow in responding because I don’t quite know what to say, but I will make the attempt now.

Myself and my family are grateful for the unselfish act of organ donation and thank God for the doctor’s knowledge and skill to perform organ transplants.

I have had a failing heart for some ten years, and was told by three outstanding doctors that I had less than five years to live without a transplant. This was in February, 2000, and I have had several heart attacks since then. I’m only telling you this to emphasize the fact that because of Donn’s unselfish act of being an organ donor, I have been given another chance at life and hope to be around to support and enjoy my friends and family for many years to come.

So you see, there is no way words can express my gratitude to you and your family. I also believe in God and thank Him every day for all his goodness to us, and pray for all of those that are less fortunate than ourselves.

Like Donn, I have a hobby of woodworking and love to fish...just went a couple of days ago. I do hope that you can find some comfort in knowing your husband’s heart went to a person that also believes in God and has some like interests in life.

I think I would like to speak to you by phone and learn more about Donn and try to answer any questions you might have. If you want to contact me, my name and phone number is listed below. If you decide not to contact me, I will understand and respect your decision.

May God bless you and your family.
Robert Pennington
Heart recipient
While most Oklahoma hospitals have made remarkable progress in increasing organ donation, one has made a breakthrough. Saint Francis Health System, one of seven Oklahoma hospitals participating in the Organ Donation Breakthrough Collaborative, was recently presented the Collaborative 75% Conversion Rate Award by Dr. Kenneth Moritsugu, Deputy Surgeon General, at the first National Learning Congress in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This award is presented to participating hospitals who have achieved an organ donation rate of 75 percent or higher.

The Organ Donation Breakthrough Collaborative was developed in 2003 when Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson joined with hospitals, organ procurement organizations and other health agencies to strive to lessen the gap between the supply and demand for organ donations.

Through the collaborative, hospital personnel are given training and resources to improve and redesign their organ procurement procedures. The goal is to help hospitals achieve donation rates of 75 percent or higher.

Fifty-eight U.S. organ procurement organizations (OPO) coordinate organ procurement in designated service areas and work to preserve organs and arrange for their distribution according to national policies.

“The work of these hospitals and OPOs helped make possible 1,400 more lifesaving transplants than occurred in 2003,” Elizabeth M. Duke, Ph.D., administrator of HHS’ Health Resources and Services Administration says. “Their achievements demonstrate that we can improve systems to boost donation rates and save many more lives in the future.”

Here in Oklahoma, LifeShare Transplant Donor Services of Oklahoma and numerous hospitals participate in the collaborative. By being a part of the collaborative, the participants have worked with other OPOs and learned many things, and have become part of a national community in action to save lives.

Through the collaborative, LifeShare of Oklahoma has gained two in-house hospital coordinators. Recently these hospital coordinators along with other LifeShare representatives attended the National Learning Congress on Organ Donation, where they were able to network with other OPOs and hospital staffs and share best practices.

“We have gained a lot from participating in the collaborative,” Samantha Mitchell, director of professional education for LifeShare of Oklahoma explains. “We now have joint accountability with local hospitals for the donation process; we have real time feedback about donation and the donation process; we have early referral and rapid response on potential organ donors and hospitals have become part of the fabric of LifeShare and LifeShare has become part of the fabric of the hospitals.”

Oklahoma hospitals participating in the collaborative are OU Medical Center, Mercy Health Center, Integris Baptist Medical Center, Integris Southwest Medical Center, Saint Anthony Hospital, in Oklahoma City, and Saint Francis Health System and St. John Medical Center, in Tulsa.
1st National Minority Donor Awareness Day
A day set aside to generate a community discussion about the specific need for minority donors, and the particular problems associated with minority recipients.

6th Donor Recognition Ceremonies
LifeShare of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Lions Eye Bank will honor organ, eye and tissue donors and their families.
Tulsa Renaissance Hotel and Convention Center
2 – 4 p.m.

7th Donor Recognition Ceremonies
LifeShare of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Lions Eye Bank will honor organ, eye and tissue donors and their families.
Reed Conference Center – Midwest City
2 – 4 p.m.