



## COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS



### *Give the Ultimate Gift of Life this Holiday*

Holiday time is upon us once again. Gathering with family and friends, reflecting on another year gone by, opening one's heart and home to the less fortunate—these are just some of the ways people celebrate the season. For many, compassion and caring for others are at its essence.

As you reflect on the holiday's true meaning for you, it seems an appropriate time to suggest you consider donating what is called the greatest gift—the gift of one's organs or tissue.

The need for these precious items is real. Every day, nearly 80 people receive a transplant that saves, or drastically improves, their lives. And each day, nearly 20 people die waiting for an organ because of shortages. Currently nearly 124,000 men, women and children need lifesaving organ transplants and 10,000 of them are right here in New York State. Every ten minutes another name is added to this long waiting list.

One donor can save up to 8 lives, while enhancing numerous others through tissue and cornea donation. Last year donors made 28,000 transplants possible in the U.S. That's countless residents right here in Putnam County with new kidneys, hearts and lungs, who have been given a new chance to continue living as parents, children, aunts and uncles, grandparents and siblings. One million others around the country received cornea and tissue transplants that have helped them recover from burns, trauma, bone damage, spinal injuries, hearing impairment and vision loss.

The impact of gifts is dramatic—and it is easy to sign up. Anyone, regardless of age or medical history, can register. Most major religions in this country support the practice. In fact, many consider it the ultimate act of love and generosity toward others. There are no costs involved for donors or their families.

Why do people hesitate? Inconvenience and misinformation are mostly to blame. Some may think it could curtail the emergency care they will receive in the hospital if they were sick or injured. Regulations and protocols prevent this, and the number-one priority for the doctors treating you is to save your life. Different doctors are involved in saving the organs. Many also hesitate because the subject of organ donation can be difficult to think about or act on. It leads us to think about our own deaths, typically not a comfortable thought.

Currently more than 120 million Americans have made their choice and enrolled to be a donor. Consider joining them. Put it on your 2015 "to do" list. For information on how to enroll or to hear the heartwarming stories of grateful recipients, visit: [www.organdonor.gov](http://www.organdonor.gov).

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