

Providing compassionate and sensitive care to donor families in the days to months, to years after a loss is an important component of the donation process. Through the Donor Family Care program, Iowa Donor Network (IDN) staff provides bereavement support and information to donor families, helping to ensure that the family continues to feel supported after their loved one's gift of donation.

## Ongoing grief support and resources

From our initial contact with the family and continuing on during the weeks and months after the death of their loved one, our specially trained staff focus on providing resources, practical information, and emotional support and guidance. The Donor Family Care Program includes:

- Bereavement literature
- Grief support program referrals
- Follow-up letters and phone calls
- Events to honor and remember loved ones
- Opportunity to share their story and volunteer at IDN activities

## Written Materials

Following their loved one's death, donor families receive a follow-up letter thanking them for their generosity, and providing general information about the transplant recipients. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the recipients identities are not disclosed.

IDN also sends bereavement information to donor families. Developed by licensed grief counselors, these materials provide information about the grieving process and suggestions on how families can get through the difficult days and months following the death of a loved one.

## Donor Family Events

Once a year, IDN hosts a candle light tribute at locations across Iowa. The holidays can often be a challenging time for individuals who have experienced a loss and these gatherings are an opportunity for families to come together and remember and honor their loved ones. Families are also able to meet each other and share their experiences as well as their ideas for coping with the upcoming holidays. These events are offered free of charge to family members.

## Donor Medal of Honor

Donor families receive a Donor Medal of Honor from IDN. The medallion was created as a testament to the generosity of organ and tissue donors and their families.

## Communication Between Donor Families and Recipients

Donor families and recipients often write letters to each other. These interactions are facilitated through IDN Donor Family Care Companions and are forwarded anonymously to maintain confidentiality. If a donor family member and recipient choose to meet, IDN facilitates the process to ensure each side has provided appropriate consent for the release of confidential information.

*"Death leaves a heartache no one can heal. Love leaves a memory no one can steal. There is never enough time with the ones we love. Deep in our hearts the memories are kept of the one that we loved and will never forget. Our family takes comfort in knowing that even in death he has given life to others and his memory will carry on."*

- Donor Family