

## **Press release: August is National Organ Donation Awareness Month**

August is National Organ donation awareness month, take the decision to #makeitknown that you are an organ donor.

Life is the best gift you can give. It's why Tell helps educate South Africans about organ and tissue donation. Tell (Transplant Education for Living Legacies) was created with heart, for hearts (and other organs).

Two of the three founders are speaking from first-hand experience, having received life-saving lung transplants. This not only gives them a second chance at life, but it places them in the unique position to make a difference in the transplant community. Their experience allows them to identify various barriers to organ transplantation and it is their mission to solve as many of these obstacles as possible.

One of the biggest problems we face in South Africa lies in the process of identifying and referring potential donors. South Africa already has a shortage of organ donors, and the lack of education around the situation is only making matters more difficult. It is also important to note that in South Africa, the donor's family has the final say in whether or not organs are permitted to be donated.

Tell's goal is firstly to help educate both potential donors as well as medical healthcare professionals, and break the stigmas and misinformation around organ and tissue donation. Secondly, they want to encourage anyone who wants to donate their organs to TELL THEIR TRIBE of their wishes to be an organ and tissue donor. Awareness is key, and they firmly believe that the most important part of improving organ donation environment is conversation.

Their mission is to end the waiting list by changing and leading the conversation around organ and tissue donation in South Africa.

### **WHO?**

#### **Anyone!**

At the time of death doctors will determine whether or not you are a suitable donor.

There are no religious or age restrictions (the oldest solid organ donor was around 80 years old) and even people with medical conditions can be organ and tissue donors.

### **WHEN?**

#### **Upon brain stem death.**

Two independent doctors, not part of the transplant team, perform detailed tests, and have to sign off brain stem death before you can be considered as a potential organ donor. The Department of Health guideline defines brain stem death as: "the irreversible loss of capacity for consciousness, combined with irreversible loss of the capacity to breathe". It is equivalent to the death of an individual. A person who is brain dead has no chance of recovery, because their body is unable to survive without artificial support.

In South Africa it is possible to be a live donor and donate a kidney or a part of your liver to a person in need, should you be an appropriate match.

### **HOW?**



### **Tell Your Family!**

In South Africa, currently the only legally-binding way in which to donate your organs and tissue at the time of your death is for your next-of-kin to give their consent for your organs and tissue to be donated. This is the case even if you have registered to be an organ and tissue donor or have written your wishes in a will. It is therefore essential to let your family know of your wishes to be an organ and tissue donor.

### **WHY?**

#### **You can save 8 lives!**

There are currently thousands of people in the South Africa waiting for a life-saving organ transplant.

The reality is that there are just too few organ donors to address this need, and consequently, many patients will not receive their organ transplant in time.

The organs that can be donated are as follows: 2 lungs, 2 kidneys, heart, liver (can be split between 2 recipients in some cases), and pancreas. You can also help between 50 and 100 people through the donation of your tissues. For example, your skin can be used to help burn victims and your corneas can be used for cornea transplants to restore a person's sight. You can also donate bone, heart valves, tendons, ligaments, and veins.

The #makeitknown campaign is a fresh approach towards organ donation awareness, part of the campaign is for participating Tattoo studios to offer the Tell Tattoo (quotation marks) for free. More than 600 people received their Tell tattoo since the start of the campaign.

#### **Why the quotation marks?**

The TELL logo incorporates quotation marks, because the most important part of organ donation is conversation. We want people to show that they've started the conversation with family and friends.

#### **For more information:**

Tell is more than happy to answer any questions you still have around organ donation. Please email [info@tell.org.za](mailto:info@tell.org.za) for more info.

