

A Curriculum for Life

Donate Life Today's online high-school program has resources for teachers and students

BY JEN BERGMAN

Donate Life Today at LifeCenter Northwest has recently taken its high-school curriculum program beyond Montana and Washington classrooms. The program, now online, increases accessibility to the curriculum (and its accompanying toolkit) so that educators across the country can better prepare their students for being asked if they want to be a registered donor.

Many students first encounter the question when they obtain their driver license. The program includes resources for both teachers and students so students can make an informed decision about donation.

For teachers, there's a 23-page resource guide, which includes a lesson-plan template, donation resources, pages on brain death and on organ, eye and tissue donation. In the guide and on the webpage there's also a handy form on which teachers can request a classroom presentation by Donate Life Today staff and community advocates.

Community advocates are volunteers with a personal link to donation who are trained to visit local classrooms. They tell their stories—about their transplant, or how their daughter saved five lives, for example—and also answer students' questions.


For students, there's a 15-min. video, "It's Your Choice," which features real-life teen recipients and donor parents telling their stories, as well as an "interactive body," describing the organs and tissues (including eyes) that can be donated. There's also a link to Donate Life Today's pages on Facebook and MySpace and another link that allows students to send "Take Five, Save Lives" e-mails to friends and family.


"Donate Life Today has excellent resources to enhance any driver education or high-school life skills course," said Jeffrey Bennett, a teacher in Clyde Park, Mont., who has used the program in his classroom. "They have a fabulous PowerPoint presentation," he added, "as well as a number of freebies to help enhance the coursework."

The resource toolkit was created to reach more students in communities where trained Donate Life Today community advocates are not available.

Working with schools, Donate Life Today also provides opportunities for students to complete service learning projects and community service requirements on increasing awareness and donor registrations.

"We hope that our high-school education program will be a catalyst for others to reach out to this important population," said Megan Erwin, executive director, Donate Life Today.

"Our goal," she added, "is to give young people the tools they need to make an educated decision about donation the first time they are asked that all-important question: 'Do you want to register as an organ, eye and tissue donor?'" 

 Visit DonateLifeToday.com/highschool. Questions can be directed to Molly Schoeb by calling 1-877-275-5269 or sending her an e-mail at mollys@lcnw.org.

Jen Bergman is a consultant to Donate Life Today.



TOP: Students from Lake Washington High School in Kirkland, Wash., proudly displaying their driver licenses, have gone through Donate Life Today's high-school program.

BOTTOM: Showing off her "Donate Life" green bracelets is Mary from Seattle's Bishop Blanchet High School.