

# The kindness of strangers

A Tulsan forms the "Circle of Life" program to honor organ donors and recipients after an Oklahoma city man's heart saved her father's life.

A stranger saved the life of Shelly Brady Koontz's father, and she had no way to thank him.

The 37-year-old man was jogging in Oklahoma City in the fall of 1996, when a car hit him.

He couldn't have expected the tragedy that happened to him, but he had the foresight to register as an organ donor.

Now the man's heart beats on inside 68-year-old Jay Brady, who received the transplant at St. Francis Hospital.

"He's a hero to my entire family," she said. "If it hadn't been for his generosity, my dad would not be here today."

It was out of love for her father and gratitude for the stranger than Brady Koontz, 39, created the "Circle of Life" program, which debuts Sunday in the Tulsa World.

The World will print special symbols on the death notices and paid obituaries of people who have donated organs, tissue and eyes and those who have received transplants during their lives.

The symbol looks like this: ☺

The effort is intended to honor donors and recipients and, hopefully, create awareness of the issue so more people consider registering themselves as donors, said World Publishing Co. President Robert E. Lorton III.

"No one wants to think about their own mortality, but you have to consider what good can be done, even in death," he said.

The newspaper is the first to participate in the "Circle of Life" program, developed by

Brady Koontz's nonprofit Global Organization for Organ Donation, or GOOD.

Funeral homes have been instructed to ask families whether their loved ones were donors or recipients and if they would like the symbol printed with the obituaries.

The World will also feature an advertising campaign that will include testimonials and facts about organ, tissue and eye donation.

"This is valuable information for our readers," said Lorton, who became personally involved with the issue about eight years ago when his mother-in-law had a kidney transplant.

"It really opened up my eyes to the whole experience," he said.

With her own money, Brady Koontz launched GOOD with the idea of spreading her "Circle of Life" program around the globe.

She is seeking grants to continue her efforts. But the first step, she said, is making the program successful in the Tulsa World.

"I have high hopes," said Brady Koontz, who was recently appointed to the state Health Department's Oklahoma Donor Education and Awareness Program Advisory council.

"I know these little symbols will have a powerful affect on people and enable them to talk about the issue more freely with their families," she said.

"All you have to do is look around the dinner table at the people you love and you'll know the if they ever needed an organ, you'd pray for someone to give it. But you have to be willing to do the same."

Oklahoma Organ Sharing Network spokesman Phil Van Stavern said there are 608 people waiting for organ transplants in the state and 81,596 nationwide.

However, only about 225 occur in Oklahoma each year and 25,000 nationwide, he said. In 2002, 47 people died while on organ waiting lists in Oklahoma and 6,571 nationwide.

"We're a lot better off here than in other parts of the country because of the natural generosity of Oklahomans," Van Stavern said. "But we're not reaching our full potential. Last year we had 61 organ donors, and I think we could have had 100."

"Every donor has the potential to save multiple lives," he said, adding that being a viable donor depends on the person's medical history and the way he or she dies.

Van Stavern said he hopes the "Circle of Life" program and the advertising campaign will educate the public about organ sharing, correct misconceptions and encourage people to register as donors.

"In death, they can give someone the gift of life," he said. "It's really a call to action."

Earlier this month, Gov. Brad Henry signed a bill into law that created a statewide registry of donors. Oklahomans who check the organ donor box on their driver's licenses will automatically be on the registry, which is expected to be in operation no later than July 2004.

For more information, visit [www.global-good.org](http://www.global-good.org)



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Shelly with her father, Jay.

- Please cut here and return with gift. -

**Yes!** I want to support the Global Organization For Organ Donation, or GOOD, in its mission to raise awareness for organ, eye and tissue donation, correct misconceptions about donation and create a greater willingness to donate.

My tax-deductible gift at one of the following levels is enclosed.

- \$100 Baby's Breath: *Pure of heart*
- \$250 Pink Carnation: *I'll never forget you*
- \$500 Scarlet Geranium: *Comfort*
- \$1,000 Daisy: *Loyal Love*
- \$1,500 Clover: *Think of me*
- \$2,500 Forget-me-not: *Memories*
- \$5,000 Zinnia: *Memory of an absent friend*
- \$10,000 Tea Rose: *I'll remember always*
- \$25,000 Magnolia: *Benevolence*
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Thank you for your generous gift.

**Thank you for helping the GOOD continue!**

Please make your tax-deductible gift payable to **GOOD** and send with this response form in the enclosed envelope to: **Global Organization for Organ Donation**, 1767 East 31st Street, Tulsa, OK 74105.

For more information, call 918-745-6637 or visit, [www.global-good.org](http://www.global-good.org)

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Global Organization for  
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