

### **Writing to Your Donor's Family**

#### **A Writing Guide for Transplant Recipients**

In caring for those we serve, Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research supports written correspondence between transplant recipients and donor families. Correspondence is monitored by the Lions Eye Institute and identities are kept confidential.

#### **Deciding What to Write**

The decision to write to your donor's family is a very personal one. Often, transplant recipients choose to write to their donor's family to express gratitude. If you choose to write, you may do so at any time after your transplant; there is no required "waiting period." Many donor family members have expressed appreciation and felt comforted from the letters and cards received from transplant recipients and their families.

If you decide to write to your donor's family, you may send a greeting card or letter. You may use the following suggestions as a guide to help you with your correspondence.

#### **Examples of What to Include:**

- Thank you card to donor family and/or Lions Eye Institute for Transplant and Research
- A letter of gratitude to donor family and/or Lions Eye Institute for Transplant and Research
- Brief description of how the transplant impacted the patient's life
- Patient/Surgeon picture with a brief case summary and post-op results

#### **Suggestions for Recipient's Correspondence:**

- Talk about yourself
  - First name only
  - The state/country in which you live (don't include city)
  - Your job or occupation
  - Your hobbies and interests
  - Your family situation: marital status, children or grandchildren (First Names only)
- Talk about your transplant experience
  - Use simple language; refrain from too much medical terminology
  - Explain how the transplants improved your health and changed your life
  - Communicate in a sensitive manner; each donor family member is unique and grieves the loss of his or her loved one in their own personal way. You may want to thank the donor family for their gift
- Closing the letter/note
  - Sign the letter, using a first name only
  - Keep identities anonymous and confidential. Avoid including last names, street addresses, phone numbers or email addresses
  - Please do not reveal the name or location of hospitals or physicians

### **Mailing Your Letter**

Place your card or letter in an unsealed, unstamped envelope. Include a separate sheet of paper with your full name and date and place (hospital or surgery center) of your transplant. Please place these items into another envelope and mail them to the Lions Eye Institute or give to your transplant physician. Lions Eye Institute staff will forward your letter to the donor's family, if they wish to receive them.

Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research reserves the right to edit all correspondence to maintain confidentiality.

### **Address to**

Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research  
Attention: Donor Family Letter  
1410 21st North Street  
Tampa, FL 33605

### **Allow Extra Time**

Since your card or letter must first be mailed to Lions Eye Institute, please allow extra time for it to reach your donor's family. It may take several weeks after you've mailed the letter for the family to receive it.

### **Will My Donor Family Write Back?**

Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that you will receive a response from your donor's family. Just as writing to your donor's family is a deeply personal decision, so is the donor family's decision about whether or not they write to their loved one's recipient. Some donor families have said that writing about their loved one and their decision to donate helps them in their grief journey while other families are not ready or do not wish to correspond with the recipient.

Either way, your written correspondence to your donor's family is a unique opportunity to thank them for their decision to donate. Donor families have shared that donation is often the only positive to come from the death of their loved one. Your card or letter reaffirms to them donations can change lives and their gift was truly appreciated.

If you need any further assistance writing to your loved one's transplant recipient, or if you would like more information about the Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research, please call **813.289.1200** or visit our website [www.lionseyeinstitute.org](http://www.lionseyeinstitute.org).

### **About Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research**

Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving visual outcomes and quality of life for those who are blind or visually impaired through innovative ocular endeavors. The Lions Eye Institute was founded by a group of Tampa Lions in 1973. As a Lions organization, we strive to fulfill the Lion's pledge to Helen Keller to be the "Knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness."