

Funeral Home Connection



A newsletter published by Donate Life Arizona

Dignity from Beginning to End



Rachel Brown, funeral home director and embalmer, received bone tissue donation when she needed a spinal fusion to get feeling back in her arm and hand.

It's no mistake Rachel Brown has a successful career in funeral services, but more than two decades later, she would tell you it wasn't part of her original plans. Nonetheless, it's been a rewarding path in her life.

"I've been very fortunate to work for this family owned and operated funeral establishment for 26 years," Brown says, adding she considers the work she does a gift.

As Hansen Mortuaries funeral home director and embalmer, every day she comforts families through difficult moments, with dignity for the deceased a top priority. She balances that with the value of donation and the importance of funeral homes working with organ and tissue recovery teams. She had a personal connection to donation as well. She is a tissue recipient.

Brown was an athlete at Arizona State University, and she was part of the Women's USA National Softball Team. She even won a gold medal in the 1993 World Games in Holland. But two herniated disks in her neck kept her from playing her favorite sports, which include golf.

"In 2004, I had to have a spinal fusion to regain the strength and feeling in my hand and arm," says Brown.

"I am forever grateful for the donor tissue that allowed me to be pain free to continue to do the things I love."

Other than softball and golf, the things she loves include camping, skiing, kayaking and spending time with her wife, Christina Underhill, and their dog—which would be difficult with spinal issues and restricted mobility.

Bone, cardiovascular, connective and skin tissues improve lives in many ways, offering healing through transplantation, such as by restoring a patient's mobility, treating severe burns, or replacing damaged heart valves. Cornea donation can restore vision for a patient who may no longer be able to drive or see the sunset.

On average, about 1,000 Arizonans heal lives through the amazing gift of tissue donation each year. In 2018 specifically, there were more than 1,400 tissue donors.

"As the need for lifesaving and enhancing tissues have changed and increased over the years, I have made it my mission to understand what tissues are being used for and how I can restore donation sites," she says, adding it's important to her to give grieving families the opportunity to see their loved one a final time, if that's part of the funeral plans.



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Greetings

From President and CEO, Tim Brown
Donor Network of Arizona

We've hit the ground running in 2019, approaching the end of a decade, but Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) isn't waiting until 2020 to start a new era in saving lives. That includes staying in tune with the effect that organ and tissue donation has on everyone involved, both personally and professionally.

We believe the gift of life is to share love with others. We coined 2018 the Year of Listening, a commitment to our professional partners, because a great way to share love is by listening and learning from each other. This means we formally invited different experts throughout the year to hear directly from them. Specifically, our team was honored to meet and hear from Rachel Brown, funeral director and embalmer with Hansen Mortuaries—and tissue recipient—who is featured on the cover of this edition of Funeral Home Connection. We also hear from Ethan Bueler of Wyman Cremation and Burial Chapel.

Their insight provided clarity in our mission to keep saving lives without unnecessarily increasing the level of burden on



DNA President and CEO Tim Brown talks with Stephanie Russell, a donor mother, whose son served in the military before becoming a tissue and cornea donor.

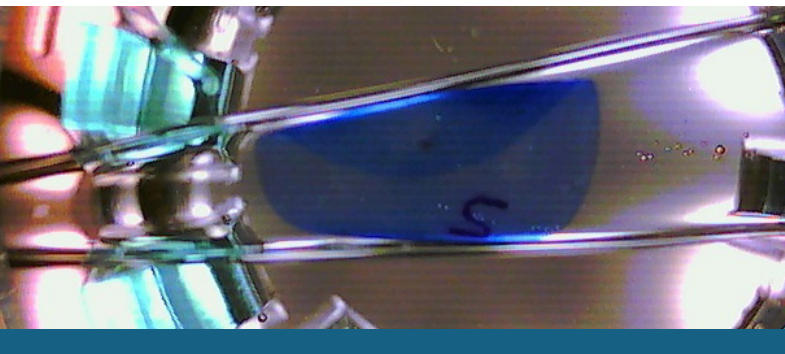
a funeral home, medical examiner or other medical professional. And it added value to the partnerships DNA strives to make mutually beneficial for all involved.

Listening has been a vital tool for DNA, and undoubtedly a useful skill for funeral home professionals when working with families through difficult moments following a loss. It's also a commitment we're making for the new year with an open invitation to contact us with questions or suggestions anytime.

Your support of donation gives us hope that Arizonans will make 2019 another record-breaking year in savings and healing lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Tim Brown.

Splitting is Caring



Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) is the state's only Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA) Accredited Eye Bank to process and distribute ocular tissue. The priority of the eye bank's staff is to support ocular surgeons' efforts to treat glaucoma patients and restore sight for the visually impaired.

Advances in ocular surgical techniques and eye bank procedures refined over the last two decades now allow for some cornea donors to restore vision for up to four people. Historically, a single donor's cornea tissue was distributed for two transplantable grafts.

In the summer of 2018, DNA began offering additional graft distribution options for the Descemet Membrane Endothelial

Keratoplasty (DMEK) corneal surgical technique, which allows for DNA's eye bank to perform corneal segmenting—which is the splitting of one cornea into two grafts for transplantation. The anterior segment of the cornea is removed after DMEK tissue processing. It undergoes additional processing for long-term preservation. The corneal tissue process is limited to donors from 55 to 75 years old.

How it works:

Using a surgical microscope to separate the tissue layers, the DMEK graft is removed from the cornea and the remaining anterior layer is rinsed and stored. The result are two segments—the DMEK graft and the anterior graft.

"DNA transplanted more than 120 DMEK grafts in 2018. Five of those DMEK grafts were segmented or split, which resulted in two transplantations from one cornea," says Sharlene Rupp, eye bank supervisor. "As the result of the generosity of others, more than 900 people received the gift of sight."

DNA sends DMEK grafts to ocular surgeons for immediate surgeries. The anterior layer is sent to another EBAA accredited eye bank for long-term preservation. These corneas in long-term preservation solution can be used for tectonic surgical procedures or glaucoma shunt coverage up to five years later.

Sending an invoice?

Follow our billing system!

Donor Network of Arizona has a reimbursement system for funeral homes as part of the commitment to improve processes for partnering organizations. Funeral home support is crucial to saving and healing lives through donation. With this invoice submission, reimbursements for services provided above and beyond usual fees will be processed faster and more efficiently. Thank you for your continued support of donation.

Please email all transportation, facility fees and restoration invoices to DNAinvoice@dnaz.org. Call Tiffany Welton at 503-522-5737 with any questions.

Outstanding Funeral Home Partners

Collaboration between funeral homes and organ procurement organizations is essential in saving and healing lives through organ, cornea and tissue donation because after recovery comes restoration. Arizona's funeral homes work to make donation more successful each year.

Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) recognized Desert Lawn Funeral Home and Samaritan Funeral Home as Outstanding Funeral Home Partners for their role in saving and healing lives at DNA's Donation Champions Awards Breakfast on Nov. 13, 2018.

DNA recognized both John Hassett and his family of Desert Lawn Funeral Home for supporting donation in any way possible and for their crucial role in transporting donors



(from l to r) Tim Brown, DNA president and CEO; owner Bryan Wilson, manager Eddie Lopez and embalmer David Zachman from Samaritan Funeral Home; Tiffany Welton, DNA partner relations coordinator.

quickly, effectively and with dignity. Any hour of the day, they are willing to do whatever is needed for a recovery to take place.

DNA also recognized Samaritan Funeral Home Owner Bryan Wilson, Director Eddie Lopez and Embalmer David Zachman for their efforts to increase donation and for always asking the question, "What more can we do to support donation?" Samaritan Funeral Home includes DNA in the community events it holds and makes an effort to understand the donation process.

David Crawford and his team were also recognized as an extraordinary transport company. In addition to being timely and responsive, they are friendly and go above and beyond expectations to ensure our donors are transported with great care.

The Donation Champions Awards Breakfast at the Arizona Biltmore celebrated the organizations that come together to make donation possible in Arizona. DNA recognized more than 100 hospital, health care, media and community partners for their dedicated efforts to help make the most of life through the gift of donation.



(from l to r) Tim Brown, DNA president and CEO; John Hassett, owner of Desert Lawn Funeral Home; Tiffany Welton, DNA partner relations coordinator.



A Hero and Healer

U.S. Army veteran Michael “Mickey” Russell believed his purpose in life was to help—in life and death. He served his country, as well as his community, with the gift of life after he passed.

In the summer of 2017, Mickey had just completed the hiring process with the Scottsdale Police Department, but he passed away suddenly after a blood clot. A year prior, he had written a letter to explain his decision to donate, “so that I can continue to serve even in death.”

Stephanie Russell, Mickey’s mother, said no one saw his death coming, but she knew her son wanted to continue giving back.

“He just said he always wanted to serve after his death,” says Stephanie, explaining the pride she has for her son who cared so much for others.



Stephanie Russell, donor mother to Army veteran Michael “Mickey” Russell, stands with NASCAR driver Joey Gase days before he raced in Mickey’s honor on Veterans’ Day weekend 2018.

Stephanie says the healing process of losing her son continues, and that giving back is an opportunity to celebrate Mickey’s commitment and service to his country.

“My son was my heart. Me and my son did everything together,” says Stephanie. “For me to still be honoring him even after a year is surreal.”

His generosity restored vision for two people. He also donated tissue that will heal the lives of dozens more.

Donate Life Arizona sponsors NASCAR Xfinity driver, Joey Gase, who raced with Mickey’s picture on the bumper of his racecar to honor him at ISM Raceway Veteran’s Day 2018. Stephanie got to sign the hood of the car at a dedication ceremony at Catholic Charities MANA House in Phoenix ahead of the race, drawing a heart around her message.

“When they see that picture, they’re going to say, ‘Why is that on there?’ And they’re going to look into [organ and tissue donation],” says Gase, adding his mother who passed away and became an organ and tissue donor inspires him. “I know we made the right choice.”



Stephanie Russell writes a message to her son Mickey on Nov. 8, 2018, on NASCAR Xfinity driver Joey Gase’s car before the Can-Am 500 Semi-Finals Race Weekend.

2018: AN UNPRECEDENTED YEAR

for organ, cornea and tissue donation

1,417 Arizona tissue donors gave the gift of healing.

Sight was restored for **913** people.

779 lives were saved through organ donation.

life
SAVER

Doug Dobson
Tempe Mortuary

For this quarter's newsletter, I want to spotlight Doug Dobson and the team at Tempe Mortuary. From the moment I met Doug, he had an interest in working together, both sharing ideas and getting feedback about how we can work together more effectively with a priority of

supporting the families in as they make final preparations for their deceased love one.

Doug goes above and beyond to help DNA staff harness all gift of life potential, and Doug is there to help in any way possible. As much as we diligently work to make the transition smooth for families and all groups involved in donation, certain challenges arise.

Recently, we had difficulty with logistics in a specific donor case, and Doug kept DNA updated in real time throughout. He also worked with the family to make sure they were cared for to the best of his ability. Because Doug prioritized communication with DNA during this case, he allowed everyone involved to respect the family's time frame for funeral arrangements.

Despite the challenges, Doug refused to let the family take on any aspect of the burden. Doug is a valuable supporter of DNA as we

continuously work to improve processes, follow regulations, and collaborate to support families and funeral homes throughout Arizona.

Thank you, Doug, for your support and commitment to the families you serve!

– Tiffany Welton
Partner Relations Coordinator





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