

Emergency Professionals Connection

A newsletter published by Donor Network of Arizona



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Contributors:

Tim Brown
Rob Houghton
Sara Pace Jones
Rhiannon Kneeven

Writers and Editors:

Alexa Citro
Kris Patterson
Nico Santos

Zero to lifesaving in 3.0 seconds



From military to law enforcement, and now living donor, Bobby Zavala has been a lifesaver in every phase of his adult life.

It took me a whole three seconds to say, "Yep, we're going to do this," says Bobby Zavala as he recalls his decision to test if he could donate a kidney to his brother. "That's what you do for your family because you love them." Those three seconds meant 18 more years that his brother, Ernie Zavala, would live a normal life.

"He was able to watch his daughter turn into a teenage girl and a woman. He was around for those formative years," Bobby says. "He was able to spend another 18 years with his wife. That wouldn't have been possible without the donation because they had just gotten married prior [to his illness]."

Bobby, now a senior director of admissions with the University of Dubuque's campus in Tempe, says his family never had prior discussions about organ, eye and tissue donation. However, he was familiar with the topic as an Army veteran since many discussions about end-of-life decisions are required before going on deployment.

"Those are the things we had to deal with if we didn't make it back," he recalls. "The Latino culture does not have this as a common topic of conversation. I truly wish we would more though."

DONATION IS A TWO-WAY STREET

The organ, eye and tissue donation conversation for the Zavala family didn't end at Bobby helping to extend his brother's life through transplantation. Some may call it kidney karma that a generous ocular donor offered the gift of restored vision to Bobby's daughter, Rhegan Zavala, who lived with corneal blindness for a few years until her cornea transplant in 2015.

Two recipients and a living donor in one family.

Bobby says his faith, and that of his family, helped them get through such difficult times, especially after Ernie passed away almost two decades after his transplant surgery.

"If I said it was easy, I'd be lying to you," says Bobby. "I continue to have faith, press forward, ask for guidance, and never give up."

What Bobby also does not want to give up is the importance of donation within the Latino community. He fears some may not prioritize the topic until it hits close to home.

"There are people out there who are missing out on life, waiting for a new opportunity to live their life normally again," he says. "You can change a life and you can save a life."

Currently, there are about 108,000 people on the national organ waiting list. More than 90,000 of them need a kidney donation.

To learn more about living donation, contact one of Arizona's organ transplant centers. To join the DonateLifeAZ Registry for deceased organ, eye and tissue donation, visit [DonateLifeAZ.org](https://www.DonateLifeAZ.org), or check the box when you obtain or renew a driver's license or state ID.

Generosity by the numbers

2020 DATA

811 LIVES SAVED
BY ARIZONA ORGAN DONORS

3 FEWER
ORGAN DONORS
THAN 2019
RECORD

DESPITE
COVID-19

311
ORGAN
DONORS

1,644
TISSUE
DONORS

655
EYE
DONORS

390
HEART VALVE
DONORS

47
PLACENTA
DONORS

NATIONAL
HEART VALVE
RECORD

60% OF ORGAN DONORS
WERE REGISTERED

ARIZONA
RECORD

31% INCREASE
IN DONOR
REFERRALS

4 MILLION
REGISTERED
IN ARIZONA

DonateLifeAZ Registry

4,096,592

* As of May 20, 2021

Calling all heroes!

Your work aids the gift of life! In 2020, first responders were involved in **996*** cases that resulted in organ, eye and tissue donation in Arizona—including fire and police departments, paramedics and other emergency professionals. You are heroes in more ways than one, and if a patient ultimately does not survive, your partnership and the support of donation for transplantation allows others to be saved and healed.

If you'd like to get more involved, Donor Network of Arizona wants to partner with you! Reach out to partnerships@dnaz.org to learn more about how your agency can make a difference in the lives of the 108,000 people on the national organ waiting list. We'd love to have your support.

**Some cases may be counted more than once if multiple agencies responded*

REGISTER TO BE
AN ORGAN, EYE &
TISSUE DONOR
DonateLifeAZ.org
1-800-94-DONOR