

WVU students make 'A Pledge for Life'

By Summer Ratcliff | Posted: Thursday, November 7, 2013 11:55 pm

There are approximately 120,000 people on the national transplant waiting list. One person who donates organs, tissues and corneas can help up to 50 people, yet each day 18 people will die because they do not receive the lifesaving transplant they so desperately need.

The Mountaineer Maniacs partnered with the Center for Organ Recovery & Education to battle these tragic numbers by registering students and faculty on the campus of West Virginia University as organ donors.

In 2011, Nefeterius McPherson, of Killeen, Texas, was fighting for her life in a Washington, D.C. hospital because of a rare bile duct and liver disease. She was placed on the liver transplant waiting list and continued to grow sicker.

At the same time, Taitlyn Shae Hughes, a 12-year-old West Virginia native, had a brain hemorrhage from an AVM rupture and passed away. Just a year earlier Taitlyn had told her parents if anything ever were to happen to her she wanted to be an organ donor.

On Nov. 6, 2011, McPherson successfully underwent a liver transplant and received a liver from Hughes. From that day McPherson has made it her mission to help save lives.

"I have made it my mission to use our story to help save other lives, but it really isn't about Taitlyn or me, it's about the bigger picture," McPherson said. "I was lucky, but there are so many people who are not as fortunate because there is a shortage of organ donors."

At the time McPherson became extremely ill she was working as a political appointee for the Obama administration and as a press secretary for U.S. trade representative Ron Kirk.

While she worked through the sickness when she was able, she soon found herself in and out of the hospital on a regular basis.

Since receiving her lifesaving liver transplant, McPherson has been able to go back to working in the legal field and doing the things she loves.

“Organ donation has given me a second chance at life, it is truly a gift that you can never repay,” she said. “It allowed me to go from being sick and basically in a race against time to find a new liver, to me being at a point where I can live life. It has allowed me to do what I at one point could not do because I was too ill.”

When McPherson learned her organ donor was a child she was shocked. She learned through Hughes’ family that her ultimate goal had been to change the world. McPherson said she is now determined to

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help her do just that.

“When I heard at the age of 11 that Taitlyn told her parents if anything should happen to her that she wanted to be an organ donor, that just blew me away,” McPherson said. “At the age of 11, most kids are not thinking about something like organ donation. It just shows how wise beyond her years she was.”

As a part of McPherson’s goal to help Hughes’ change the world, she contacted the Mountaineer Maniacs and invited them to help spread the message of organ donation.

“The Maniacs chose to become involved in this campaign because of Nefeterius’ connections to WVU and her passion for creating awareness for organ donation,” said Elayna Conard, Mountaineer Maniacs community service director.

“The Maniacs were excited to represent this project because of our mission to inspire students to enjoy every aspect of being a Mountaineer from sporting events to community service.”

Over the last month the Maniacs have encouraged WVU students to make a pledge for life and sign up to become an organ donor. The Maniacs’ organ donation challenge will continue throughout the next week. Students may visit the table set up in the Mountainlair or register on the CORE website.

“I’m sure Taitlyn did not know exactly how she was going to change the world, but I believe she is going to do so by helping to change mindsets about organ donation,” McPherson said.

“Organ donation sees no race, gender, age, financial status or social class, and that’s a very beautiful thing.”

For more information about organ donation or to register as an organ donor. visit

<http://pledge.core.org/wvu/>

http://www.thedaonline.com/news/university/article_0b98692a-4832-11e3-8e60-001a4bcf6878.html