

Event promotes organ donation

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FOLLANSBEE - James Funeral Home and the Center for Organ Recovery and Education again have teamed to encourage people to register as organ donors through an event that included testimony by two local residents whose lives were saved by organ donations.

Tom Derby, pastor of Colliers Way Church, and Michelle Wuyak, a Weirton native and Follansbee resident, expressed their gratitude to those who donated their hearts.

Derby brought photos of Billy Frederick, a 19-year-old Columbus-area man whose heart Derby received after he died in a car accident about nine years ago.

Article Photos



ORGAN DONATION PROMOTED — On hand to encourage people to register as organ donors at the second Gift of Life Awareness Event held by the Center for Organ Recovery and Education and James Funeral Home were, from left, Shante Wells, director of professional services for C.O.R.E.; Tom Derby, pastor of Colliers Way Church of Christ and an organ recipient; Eric Fithyan, owner of James Funeral Home; and T.J. Roser, funeral director-coroner liaison for C.O.R.E. Derby and Michelle Wuyak, a Weirton native and Follansbee resident, shared how they received hearts provided by organ donors. — Warren Scott

He recalled how Frederick's mother, Nina, asked to hear his heart upon meeting him and that Frederick's father, Bob, told him he understood that many organ recipients question whether they are worthy.

"He told me, 'We think you're more than worthy,'" Derby said.

"Every day I live I try to live in honor of the gift they gave me and the blessings that God gave me," he added.

"Do I believe in organ donation? With all my heart," said Wuyak, who said she received the heart of a woman who had died from a brain aneurysm 14 years ago.

Prior to that, she suffered from a viral infection to her right ventricle and at the age of 31, was told to get her affairs in order.

Wuyak said it didn't surprise her to hear her donor was active in the community, very compassionate and loved life.

Shante Wells, director of professional services for C.O.R.E., said more than 117,000 Americans await an organ transplant, with another added every 12 minutes. Each day 18 of them die, she said.

T.J. Roser, funeral director-coroner liaison for C.O.R.E., said through the donation of organs, a person can help up to eight people while a tissue donor can enhance the lives of 50 people.

He noted people can indicate their desire to be an organ donor while renewing their driver licenses, adding organ donor cards also can be obtained through C.O.R.E. Information can be found at www.core.org.

A national not-for-profit organizations serving West Virginia, Pennsylvania and part of New York, C.O.R.E. is among organ procurement organizations operating in the U.S.

The group has worked with Eric Fithyan, owner of James and Chambers funeral homes, to promote organ donor awareness. Fithyan will fly a flag and display a green light outside the funeral homes at night this month to mark Donate Life Month.

Fithyan was assisted in raising the flag by Follansbee Councilwoman Iris Ferrell, whose husband was a heart recipient and who has received bone transplants herself.

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<http://www.weirtondailytimes.com/page/content.detail/id/598082/Event-promotes-organ-donation.html?nav=5008>