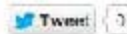


PANTAGRAPH.COM

Father shares story of how loss of son helped save others



Steve Smedley

Kay Rogers of Washington, spoke with Advocate BroMenn Medical Center president Colleen Kannaday after speaking about his son, Nicholas Rogers, who passed away at the age of 11 on Father's Day 2010. Rogers spoke during an organ and tissue donation awareness event held at BroMenn on Tuesday, April 16, 2013. His bone organ donation saved the lives of four people in four states. (The Pantagraph/STEVE SMEDLEY)

Buy Now

3 hours ago • By Paul Swiech | pswiech@pantagraph.com

0 Comments

NORMAL — An 11-year-old Washington boy who brought life into every room that he entered has given life to four people in four states.

On Tuesday, the story of Nicholas Rogers — who died on Father's Day 2010 — was shared by his father, Kay Rogers, to encourage people to sign up to be organ and tissue donors.

"I want people to register," Rogers said after an organ and tissue donation awareness event at Advocate BroMenn Medical Center, Normal, which included the dedication of a memorial bench.

Joining Rogers at the event were Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White, who maintains the state's organ and tissue donor registry; organ recipients Mikahla Thornton, 15, Bloomington (heart transplant) and Annika Tiede, 12, Normal (liver transplant); and representatives of the Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, Life Goes On and BroMenn.

"Don't focus on tragedy," Rogers said. "Focus on hope."

Thornton smiled. "I can run now. I can go for a walk with the dogs. I can walk upstairs," she said.

Nicholas was an active, fun boy, his father recalled.

"He never stopped moving," Rogers said. "He lived and loved every day. He just brought so much life into the room."

Nicholas, who had asthma, stopped breathing on June 20, 2010. Nebulizer treatment and CPR didn't help and he died of a severe asthma attack.

As the family members gathering at OSF Saint Francis Medical Center, Peoria, tried to understand what had happened, someone mentioned organ donation.

"It was a moment of clarity," Rogers said. "Nicholas was the kind of kid, if we had asked 'Could we take one of your kidneys?' and explained that it was going to help someone, he would have said 'OK.'"

The following month, Rogers received a letter that Nicholas' heart had saved the life of a 14-year-old boy in Kansas, his liver had saved a 12-year-old boy in Minnesota, his right kidney and pancreas had saved a 34-year-old man in Illinois and his left kidney had saved a 50-year-old woman in Texas.

"When I read that letter to my family, it brought a sense of relief," Rogers said. "In a way, Nicholas is still alive. He's living through others."

Outside BroMenn, a memorial bench, created by artist Melanie Hunter of Bloomington, was unveiled to honor organ and tissue donors, recipients and their families, and a Donate Life flag was raised. The flag will be raised anytime a BroMenn patient donates an organ or tissue.

White said 300 Illinoisans die each year awaiting a life-saving transplant.

"Join us to be a part of this meaningful program," White said.

Life Goes On

- In 2012, Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network recovered 807 lifesaving organs from 270 donors for transplantation in Illinois. Another 1,202 people were tissue donors.

- As of Tuesday, 5,179 Illinoisans were awaiting a life-saving organ transplant.

- Register to be an organ and tissue donor at one of the 138 Illinois Secretary of State offices, at www.LifeGoesOn.com or by calling 800-210-2106.