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## **If You Could, Would You Save Another Person's Life?**

**BY DAVID PENNER Jan. 2006**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Transplant Game, Edmonton, Alberta, August 8<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

Wheezing, lying in bed, his chest heaves jarringly. The oxygen tubes have worn away the skin around his nose. He sleeps longer days now, and the grayness of his complexion never leaves. Slowly, I am losing my father.

As an attempt at normalcy, even though his every action follows a decision as to its worth, we have a family barbecue. Eating sausage, we sit together, and talk about good times. We had so many wonderful camping trips together - I recall how my father and I would practice our "canoe tipping". Just then, the phone rings.

"Can I speak to Kurt Penner, please?"

"Hello?"

"This is Toronto General Hospital. We have a pair of lungs for you. Can you come get them?"

A match! After a year on the waiting list, we finally get the call! Leaving the food on the table, we race to the hospital. 12 hours later, my father is resting in recovery, and 3 weeks later we are all back at home, eating sausage.



**July, 2005 - Kurt Penner of Canada wins the Gold Medal for Lawn Bowling at the 2005 World Transplant Games in London, Ontario**

I cannot stress enough the miracle of organ donation. Last July, my father participated in the 2005 Organ Donor Olympics. Beating out Scotland and Ireland, he won the gold medal in lawn bowling. In three years he has gone from not being able to leave the house to winning an international sports event. If it had not been for that one soul who registered to be a donor, that podium would have been empty.

Choosing to donate is a very personal decision. I realize that some people are repulsed by imagining their bodies being torn apart after death, some believe that they are not worthy candidates, some are skeptical about the process and some cannot be bothered to register.

Before making a decision, we must be aware that we can choose what to donate - one person's organs can save the lives of more than ten people. No one is too old, young, or sick to donate (Canada's oldest donor is 92, and even my father, a recipient himself, is able to donate). No major religion opposes donation. By law, donation is completely anonymous. It is illegal for brain-dead victims to be kept alive in order to preserve their organs. And lastly, in the time it takes to read this article, anyone can register.

Your wishes must be respected. If you *don't* feel repulsed by perpetuating another's existence, then please register today: [www.transplant.bc.ca](http://www.transplant.bc.ca).

\* \* \* \* \*

In B.C., as of January 22, 2006, there are 346 people on the waiting list for an organ transplant. Statistics from the B.C. Transplant Society reveal that:

- There is a chronic shortage of hearts, lungs, kidneys and livers for transplant in BC as the need far outweighs the number of organs available for transplant.
- Approximately one of every three organs that could be available for transplant is lost because the wishes of the loved one are not known by their family.
- Many of those waiting for a solid organ transplant die on the waiting list.
- Demand for transplants is increasing while the number of organ donors remains unchanged.

I am not usually interested in "the cause of the week," but this one is easy. Just by signing a form, I know I may be saving another person's, a person like my father's, life.

Watch Kurt Penner vie for the national lawn bowling title this summer at the 2006 Canada Transplant Games in Edmonton (Aug 8<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>). Feel good about yourself; register to be an organ donor today at [www.transplant.bc.ca](http://www.transplant.bc.ca).



**Organ Donor Awareness Green Ribbon**