



## A Letter from a Donor Mom

Dear Donor Family,

As a donor family member, I have some understanding of how you may be feeling at this time. Please know you are not alone. Your pain is shared by those of us who have also learned to live without the ones we love.

Tragedy strikes when we least expect it, and we never expect it to happen to us. How could I have guessed that bright, beautiful fall day in 1983, as I watched my healthy six-year-old skip down the driveway to board her school bus, it would be for the last time?

She turned, waved and gave me a big dimpled smile; the last I was to see. Six hours later, she collapsed on her school playground from a sudden brain hemorrhage, and within a few short days she had become our family's first organ and tissue donor.

I thought my world had ended. How could this have happened? How could I go on? It wasn't real. Children don't die, and certainly not my child who was so full of life and love, which she gave so freely. No one could really understand how I was feeling. I felt all alone. The pain was unbearable. I would never laugh again.

As the months passed, I slowly came to understand that death does happen. Death is not unique to donor families. Death is an inevitable part of life; an ending, but also a new beginning. Slowly, very slowly, with the love and support of my family, some old friends, and some new ones too, I have gone on. In the beginning, I took small steps toward healing, just one minute at a time. And then slowly, I found that I could handle a whole day. At times, I was hard on myself. I should be better. I should be able to do this or that. There was guilt and anger, sadness and loneliness. There must have been something I could have done to save my child, but there were no answers.

And then, I began to realize that I could once again appreciate a blue sky, a pretty flower or a child's giggle. The days did go on, the pain was softer. I did not feel so alone, and I could laugh again. The love that Katie and I shared will always be with me. I came to understand that never having had her love, never having had our Kate, would have been the greatest loss of all. She lived, she gave to others, she made a difference.

And so, I say to you now, you need not be alone, your pain may soften in time and you may laugh again, too.

My thoughts and prayers are with you.

*Maggie*

A Donor Mom