

INSIDE OUT

How do you know someone's heart? Is it by hearing their story? Perhaps.

After my husband died, I was privileged to hear the intimate stories of many individuals and families through the Washington Regional Transplant Community. Listening to those stories truly did make me, in the words of Thomas Mann want to "fall down and worship" some of the donors and donor families.

When Jim died, he donated bone, tissue, and his corneas to multiple people. The Transplant Community reached out to me in my grief, and I met dozens of other donor families. I heard their stories in grief groups, at candle lightings and tree-trimmings, while we joined our quilt squares together, and at the joyous celebration of life held each year to thank and honor donor families. Each story told of someone who during a time of terrible grief was somehow able to transcend their own present pain and think of the future for someone else.

As I continued to work with the community, I also heard the stories of living donors who selflessly gave an organ from their body to make another's life better and the stories of organ recipients whose lives had been almost indescribably changed by the literal heart of another.

Do I *know* these people? Perhaps not – but I have been given a glimpse into their souls; and they are beautiful.

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