

Have a heart; consider donating yours

Staff Editorial

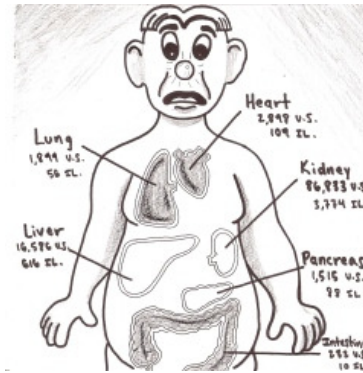
By

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We Loyolans are a generous bunch. Given the social justice-loving nature of our Jesuit university, it's no surprise that at almost any time of the year, you can likely find a group on campus hawking brownies or collecting pennies to support a host of worthy causes. But this fall, we are being asked to donate something way more personal than canned goods or clothing — we're asked to donate ourselves. Or more specifically, our organs.

Through Nov. 13, Loyola's student chapter of [Donate Life Illinois](#) is participating in the statewide organization's annual Campus Challenge, a campaign that aims to register as many college students as possible as donors on the state's organ and tissue donor registry. Last year, Loyola logged 99 new donors and is looking to register even more this year to fill the need of the 4,700 Illinois residents awaiting transplants.



The Phoenix / Miles Wisniewski

Achey breaky heart — Thousands of Americans await transplants daily. Today, eighteen will die before receiving an organ.

Even though the Editorial Board recognizes that posthumous organ donation is a highly personal choice, myths and misconceptions abound about this particular topic, and we feel you should at least be aware of some key facts to get to the, er, heart of the matter:

Right now, more than 100,000 people nationwide are awaiting organ donation — try to picture a crowd 10 times bigger than Loyola's 10,000-strong undergraduate student body and you'll get the idea. A new person is added to the national list every 11 minutes according to [Gift of Hope](#), the federally-designated non-profit organ and tissue donor network for much of Illinois. Every day, 18 people on that list will die waiting for a life-saving transplant.

Advancements in modern medicine have made it possible for just one donor to save or enhance the lives of 25 people. Just statistically, that's a whole lotta life, but for the recipients and their families blessed by the generosity of a donor, each beat of a new heart and each breath through new lungs is a gift beyond measure.

One of the most common myths about organ donation is that health care professionals won't work as hard to save the life of an emergency patient who happens to be an organ donor. Several pre-eminent medical organizations, including the [Mayo Clinic](#) (and they're pretty credible, right?) say this myth is completely false, and that doctors in charge of emergency care are completely separate from transplant surgeons. According to Gift of Life's Web site, "Organ and tissue recovery takes place only after all efforts to save your life have been exhausted and death has been legally declared."

Sadly, many other common misconceptions prevent potential donors from signing up: that donors can't have an open-casket funeral (when in fact, you can), that there's an age limit for donors (when in fact, there aren't), or that donating one's organs is religiously prohibited (actually, many major religions are supportive of organ donation and leave the decision up to the individual).

Further confusing the issue is that, due to a change in state law in 2006, all Illinois donors must re-enter under a new registry. Previously, surviving family members could overturn the deceased's documented wish to donate (and did so about 20 percent of the time). The 2006 law changed this

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practice, instead making the donor's documented wishes before death binding. However, implementation of the law required a brand new registry to be created, and many Illinoisans unaware of the change may still need to add their names to the new registry (to sign up online under the new registry, visit www.donatelifellinois.org).

Sure, thinking about what may happen to your body after you die is a tad bit morbid — but let's face it, each slasher-flick rerun we indulge in between now and Halloween confronts us with our own mortality anyway. Instead of watching *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* for the umpteenth time, take a minute to surf over to [Loyola's Campus Challenge Facebook page](#), and seriously ponder your stance on giving someone the biggest treat of all: life itself.

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