

NEWS

Recognition and respect for donors

SEVEN-year-old Zachary Hide was pronounced brain dead on November 14, 2002. The next evening his life support system was detached and he quietly slipped away.

But four other people were given a better chance at life, as recipients of Zachary's kidneys, liver and heart.

By SUSIE STEENS

EVERY year Organ Donation New Zealand has a Thanksgiving Service where the lives of those who have given organs are recognised, and recipients pay their respects.

For the last two years Te Puke resident Lydia Wilkinson has been one of only two people asked to address the Auckland service to tell their story. The

ODNZ website is currently being revamped in the hope of attracting more donors, and her story will also feature there.

At any one time 400 New Zealanders may be waiting for an organ transplant and many more are awaiting tissues. Some people will die while waiting.

Donors can specify the organs and tissues for donation. During 2006 there were just 25 deceased donors, much fewer than previous years.

Check out www.donor.co.nz



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ZACHARY'S family, back left: Brody, Kimberley and Jordan Hide, with Dave and Lydia Wilkinson in front, holding a photo of Zachary.

Zachary's final gift – life

It was an ordinary morning in the Hide household at Waipu Cove, a rainy day in November, 2002.

Mum, Lydia, was making breakfast for the little ones Brody (1) and Kimberley (4), while from the kitchen window watching her sons Zachary (7) and Jordan (5) racing down the drive to catch the school bus.

The station wagon driver had his eye on the bus, but didn't see the little boy intent on catching it. His passenger side wing mirror was exactly the right height to catch Zachary. The impact threw him into the air, his head crashing onto the road.

The next hours passed in a blur for his parents — waiting for the ambulance, the scan indicating severe brain swelling, a flight to Starship hospital where doctors worked hard to try to release pressure. A second brain scan showed irreversible damage, just the life support system now keeping Zachary alive.

"At that moment I knew that I would never again see my son laugh or smile, eat his favourite meal or tell me that he loved me," says Lydia Wilkinson, who now lives in Te Puke with her family.

Ironically, just a month before the accident Zachary had asked his mum about the word 'donor' on her drivers license.

"I told him all about it and he said he thought that was a really cool thing to do, if you didn't need your body anymore," recalls Lydia. "So when (Organ Donor team leader) Janice Langlands asked if we would consider donating Zachary's organs, we knew that it was our little boy's choice and that we would gift the parts of his body that he had no use for any more."

A baby boy received a piece of Zachary's liver; one kidney went to a 12-year-old boy, the other to a middle-aged woman. Sadly the three-year-old girl who received Zachary's heart has since died and Lydia says that was like another grieving.

"It made it easier to know my son's heart was still beating, but the little girl was just days away from dying before the transplant and was able to be with her family for another two years," she said. "We are ecstatic the other recipients are continuing to do well; it's almost like a parting gift that Zachary could give — if he had to die, then he could give others a chance. Their lives are a testament to Zachary's wishes." Although New Zealand recipients are anonymous a message was posted on the website the family maintain to Zachary's memory, from a woman who knows the liver recipient: "The precious gift you have given has been honoured and much treasured here in Australia — the greatest gift that one can ever give another".

Lydia is now a great advocate of organ donation and happy to tell her story.

"I find it therapeutic and if it touches the heartstrings of people who may wish to consider this an option then it's worthwhile. There are so few people who fit the criteria and then there has to be a perfect

match — that's why Zachary's heart and liver went to Australia. Many people have 'organ donor' on their drivers license but haven't discussed their wishes with their families, who could over-ride this at a critical time."

Donation of organs is only possible when a person's brain has died and that person is on a ventilator in ICU. Tissue (heart valves, cornea, skin and bone) can be donated after death.

Lydia says it's important to make your feelings well known — making a note in a will could be too late. She says the 18-year-old girl who performed CPR on Zachary on the roadside that day, allowed them the small pocket of time to spend with Zachary before he died.

"It's thanks to her that we had the opportunity to honour Zachary's last and most powerful wish."

Visit Zachary's website at www.zacharyhide.co.nz

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