

National Donate Life Month

Makenzie's Story

On Friday, April 22nd from 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM, Marcy Robitaille from Physician Billing will be setting up a table outside Maple View Café to engage people in conversation and share information about organ donation. April is National Donate Life Month, and Marcy has a compelling story to share about her passion for the issue of organ and tissue donation.

Marcy's commitment to the issue has come out of a tragic loss – the sudden passing of her 17 year-old daughter Makenzie Goode in a car accident in 2010. Makenzie was driving to school on a wintry day when a random patch of ice caught her tire and spun her into a fire hydrant. Despite intensive medical interventions, her injuries were not survivable, and her family was asked to consider donating her organs to help others struggling with serious illness. "I wasn't really surprised when we were approached about organ donation," says Marcy. "I kind of knew it was coming, and I knew it was what Makenzie would have wanted." Though Marcy's feelings about it were clear, other family members needed some time and support to come to the same clarity. Throughout their discussions Marcy kept coming back to the question of "What if it was our child who was so desperately in need of an organ, and we were waiting for a family to come through for us?"

Makenzie's heart, pancreas, liver, lungs, and kidneys ended up saving the lives of six people, and though the pain of her loss is ever-present, Marcy has channeled her energy into becoming an advocate and activist for organ and tissue donation. She has served as an Ambassador for the New England Organ Bank with the Registry of Motor Vehicles, encouraging RMV employees to engage customers in discussion about organ donation and helping them sign up as donors. She speaks regularly at colleges and universities about her experience, and is encouraged that so many college students are already enrolled as organ donors.

Since Makenzie's death, Marcy has reached out to the recipients of her daughter's organs. She corresponds regularly with five out of the six of them, and has had the pleasure of meeting three of them. The connection between donor families and recipients is unique and often results in deep bonds. Marcy was invited to the wedding of the daughter of the recipient of Makenzie's pancreas and sat at the head table with the rest of the recipient's family.

Marcy never could have imagined that her involvement with this cause would lead her to such incredible new adventures and new relationships – including a trip to the Transplant Games of America in Houston, where she marched in the Opening Ceremonies with Team New England and shared Makenzie's



Marcy Robitaille

story at the Donor Recognition event. Marcy has also documented her experiences in a book, titled "Wish You a Goode Journey", and maintains a blog at <http://www.agodwink.com>. In both her book and her blog she writes about the "treasures" she's found in sharing Makenzie's story with the world – the intriguing coincidences and connections she finds with recipients and other donor families: The recipient of Makenzie's heart reports developing a powerful post-transplant taste for peanut butter and apples, one of Makenzie's favorite childhood snack, while a young liver recipient Marcy met became obsessed with watching "Say Yes To the Dress" following her transplant – only to discover that her donor had been a 70 year old seamstress who had made wedding dresses for decades. These seemingly random signs Marcy encounters convince her that her daughter is still very present in the world, not only in the lives she saved through organ donation, but in the meaning and purpose she has brought to her mother's life.

"I'm so proud of my daughter," says Marcy. "I think she'd be thrilled about the impact she's made. She was a very compassionate young lady, and she'll always be my hero." Marcy welcomes all to stop by her table outside Maple View Café on April 22nd to hear more about organ donation, find out how to enroll as a donor (there is even a cellphone app!), and learn about the importance of educating your family and loved about your wishes concerning donation. "It's critical to have that conversation with your family," says Marcy. "Not everyone is on the same page, and it's important that anyone who might be making decisions on your behalf knows your feelings."