

Impact Statement from Niki Kigerl

My name is Niki Kigerl and I was honored to receive the 2025 Community of Excellence Award from Donor Alliance. I would like to share with you the importance of this organization to myself and my students. Every year, Donor Alliance educators come to Eaglecrest High School and share their amazing program to our students. Their incredible educators reach about 600-700 students every year at Eaglecrest High School through our freshman biology classes. Our students, consistently when asked to reflect on the year, mention this program as one of the most impactful lessons of the school year. When asked, what will you remember years from now, many students mention this program and specific information they learned. Students are able to physically touch and learn about the human organs (which have been preserved) and additionally learn about how organs are allocated, and also about the importance of skin tissue and eye donation. Our students learn about the gift of life and I can't think of anything more fitting than that in biology, which is quite literally the study of life. Our students are completely engaged in the lesson and love to share their personal experiences with organ donation. Students are asked to share what they learned with their families by completing a survey at home. The main goal is for our students to leave with an increased awareness of organ donation and its ability to save lives. That way, they are informed when they go to the DMV to get their learner's permit or drivers license. Donor Alliance encourages open conversations among families, leading to higher registration rates and, ultimately, more lives saved in our community.

As we know, organ donation has the power to save and transform lives, yet a significant gap remains in public awareness and understanding. Every day, individuals awaiting life-saving transplants face uncertainty due to a shortage of available organs. Education on organ donation is critical in bridging this gap, dispelling myths, and empowering individuals to make informed decisions. This incredible and free program, from Donor Alliance, serves to educate the community on the importance of organ and tissue donation. Colorado has a very high rate of organ donation compared to other states and I would like to think it is due to programs such as the Transplantation Science by Donor Alliance.

My son Joe Kigerl, who has biliary atresia, a rare and progressive liver disease, will eventually need a liver transplant so this is also deeply personal. Additionally, every year there are students who have been positively impacted through familial organ and tissue donation and they are so excited to share their personal stories as well. The life saving impact of organ donation is a universal human experience.

By increasing awareness, we can ensure more people understand the medical, ethical, and personal implications of donation..This leads to stronger communities, fostering hope, and ensuring that no life is lost due to a lack of awareness or misinformation regarding organ donation. Donor Alliance is a shining example of a win-win for Colorado communities, and our Colorado students.