

Dear Donor Family,

It's not easy finding the words to say, when a situation like this makes you speechless. I can say thank you a million times, but it will never encompass the way I feel.

I want to start by telling you a little bit about myself and my situation – as much as I can give you.

I was born with a terminal lung disease called Cystic Fibrosis. You may or may not be familiar with the disease, but it is basically where the lungs and airways get filled with mucous and cause inflammation and decrease the ability to breath. Common symptoms with this disease are consistent coughing, lots of chest infections (pneumonia) and the production of phlegm (bacteria). For myself as well, I also have the disease in the pancreas, gastrointestinal and liver, however it so far has never gotten to the point of being anything too serious. With Cystic Fibrosis I took a lot of pills, inhalers and needed to do a lot of chest therapy, but the nature of the beast took over and took away my ability to fight – the ability for me to live.

I was born with this disease, and it had in many ways made me dislike my life. It was very hard for me to accept who I was as a person, and made me feel less loveable. I tried not to let it got me down, as I always found it important to me to keep pursuing my dreams. I have always dreamt of having an education, a family, a career, and so forth. At the same time, my lung disease has molded me and made me who I am today; a strong, independent person who is brave. Who

fights for their right to live, who looks at the world in a whole different light. If not for this disease, I would never know the true meaning of life. I would never know how to appreciate the value of tangible as well as intangible things. It has made me realize how strong and how important my family is in my life, and how much I mean to people.

The last 5 years of my life has been nothing but a constant struggle; living mostly in the hospital for 6 months stays at a time. The last year of the battle, I was on oxygen full time, and more towards the end, a special machine at night (Bi-pap) to help assist my breathing (as I wasn't able to breathe well enough on my own anymore). On May 27, 2009 I got the very special "call"; my lungs have come. I had only waited for a very short time because I was rapidly deteriorating; however while being on my death bed, the wait felt like forever. Fast forwarding to after I finally woke up from the surgery and came to, I realized how close I was to dying and how grateful I was for this second chance at life. However, for me, I consider it a first chance – a chance for me to do the things I have never been able to do, and for me to do the things I haven't been able to do in a really long time. I am now able to live like a normal human, doing the things that I want without being inhibited by my health. I realize now even more so, how precious life is and how amazing this gift is that I have been given. I have come across a lot of people in my life already and have met some really horrible and unkind people, but then there are the people like my donor and you (the family) who are the most generous, most kind people I could ever imagine. Without my donor, I wouldn't be here today. I can't even fathom what you must be going through,

being on the other end, grieving for your loved one; however you have given me such a special gift, a gift I could never even think of receiving. I always think of my donor and you (the family) and wonder who you wonderful people are, and how you have changed my life in a way that you will never understand or know. You have given me happiness and health and a fresh start at my life. I was bedridden for 8 months and had to learn to walk again and it was the greatest feeling of achievement I've ever felt. Taking each breath, appreciating what life has to offer, living each day to the fullest and to each day as it comes to me. To look at things in a different light, in a way that only people in my shoes would understand. And as much as I can only say THANK YOU, I feel as though those words will never be enough.

I am now going to be starting school in January and will get my second degree in marketing within the next year. I intend to take up some dance classes next year (as my legs are still weak and the muscles still need to get stronger). I plan on traveling to many places – some parts of Canada, Australia, Las Vegas and Europe (as I have never taken a 'real' vacation). I plan on volunteering and promoting organ donation in Toronto, as I am very pro-active about that and think it's a worthy and important cause (especially as I am now a recipient). I plan on getting a part time job and than eventually achieving a career that I love, a family, and mostly a LIFE. I have never been able to look towards the future, but now I see my future in full force full of fun, excitement, adventures, love and mostly health. My future being full of a chance to grow and experience things like

everyone else that I know. I have been given the chance of a lifetime and boy, am I ever so grateful and proud.

I could never thank you enough; I could never thank your loved one enough. I am more than speechless and touched at how someone can have the ability to save another human beings life. I can only apologize for the loss of your loved one, and hope that at the same time, realize you have given the worlds most outstanding gift and have done an incredible deed. My donor and family, I want to tell you that not a day goes by where you have never gone unthought of, and I will always keep you close to my heart.

Forever Grateful, with love,