

WEST VIRGINIA SCHOOL OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE



HUMAN GIFT REGISTRY

For the benefit of future generations

Introduction

The donation of your body is a compassionate and selfless act that will benefit medical education and research, impacting generations of people from West Virginia and the surrounding states positively. This humanitarian gift will help educate our future physicians at the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (WVSOM), who will go into a variety of medical fields with the sole purpose of improving the health of countless people for many generations. Our students are our greatest resource, and they are talented, intelligent, hard-working and compassionate people who want to help their patients. They will be the ones you lean on in times of greatest need. They will also treat you, your children and even your grandchildren, and these students, in turn, will help train our next generation of clinicians to make an even greater impact.

After death, the body can become a gift of life given to others for formal medical training of health care professionals in the detailed study of human anatomy or for research to enable scientists to make new discoveries. Serious and dedicated study of the human body is absolutely essential in order to develop the specialized skills and advanced knowledge a medical professional must have to provide quality health care in West Virginia and throughout the United States.

People in West Virginia or adjoining states can easily respond to the critical need to support medical education and research at WVSOM, Marshall University, West Virginia University and other institutions. The laws of West Virginia and other states authorize donation of your body. It is a simple process for you to convey this priceless gift for humanity to the Human Gift Registry. No expense is incurred by the donor or survivors. Donations may be made by an individual any time prior to death.

Nearly all bodies used for teaching and research are donated. Accordingly, our educational and research programs rely on continued generosity from individuals and families. Your support is essential for the success of our training programs and research mission. The mission of the Human Gift Registry is so important to me that I am also a registered donor to this program. I love teaching anatomy to students, and this program will enable me to do what I love, teaching anatomy, after my death. My father passed away in 2013, and he also was an enthusiastic donor to the WVSOM Human Gift Registry.

I invite you to read through this booklet for more information about the WVSOM Human Gift Registry and body donation program. On behalf of the Human Gift Registry and the West Virginia Anatomical Board, I want to thank you for considering this donation that contributes in a real and meaningful way to the health and well-being of every West Virginian and many others who benefit from the advancement of medical practice and treatment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "H. Wayne Lambert, Ph.D." The signature is written in a cursive style.

H. Wayne Lambert, Ph.D.
Chair, West Virginia Anatomical Board

Benefits and procedures



This booklet provides information on the benefits of and procedures for donating a body to the Human Gift Registry program through the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (WVSOM). The Human Gift Registry program was developed to enhance the medical education and research needs of the state of West Virginia and the region. Bodies donated through WVSOM support these essential activities at one of the three major medical institutions in West Virginia — WVSOM, Marshall University and West Virginia University along with their Human Gift Registries. The programs are operated under the authority and oversight of the West Virginia Anatomical Board.

life is a gift

“Life is a gift, and it offers us the privilege, opportunity and responsibility to give something back by becoming more.”

~ Tony Robbins



Respect and dignity

for the donors and their families

Choosing to donate your body for the purpose of medical education and research is a supremely compassionate and altruistic humanitarian gesture. Through this priceless gift, given for the benefit of future generations, you can provide an unprecedented legacy of learning and a foundation for the successful training of medical professionals as they pursue specialized skills and the advanced knowledge required to provide the utmost in quality health care.

Through your donation, you will enable medical students to learn clinical care skills that simply cannot be replicated through any other means. No textbook, model or even the most sophisticated graphics can replace the powerful and life-changing experience of learning from a real human body, in all its miraculous form and function.

Bodies donated through the WVSOM Human Gift Registry are treated with the utmost respect and dignity, for the donors and for the families. Because the only source of bodies for education comes through donation, students and faculty truly understand and appreciate the invaluable gift they have been given. The ongoing generosity of individuals

and families in donating to this program is vital to the continued success of our training programs to prepare physicians and other health care professionals for lifelong careers in providing outstanding health care services.

In addition to the many benefits of donation for education and research, donor families also benefit from the knowledge and peace of mind that, even in death, their loved one can provide the gift of life to others. There are also financial benefits: Donating your body can relieve your family of the potentially heavy financial burden of funeral and interment costs. No expenses for the donation are incurred by the donor or survivors.

The donation process itself is simple, and donations may be made by an individual at any time prior to death or, in some cases, by an authorized family member or other designee after death.

On behalf of WVSOM and the West Virginia Anatomical Board, thank you for considering this incredibly generous gift.

WHY DONATE?

provide life to others

The Human Gift Registry program in West Virginia was established to serve the educational and research needs of the state and region. There is no substitute for the opportunity to learn human anatomy from an actual human body.

Basic anatomical training is an early part of the educational curriculum for all medical, dental, nursing and physical therapy students. Studying the structure of the human body to understand the wondrous complexities and uniqueness within each of us is a vital component of training in virtually every medical specialty.



An invaluable gift
your final gift could last for generations

Benefits

for education, research and study

An essential part of WVSOM's approach to physician training is the Donor as Patient program. In addition to anatomical study, the body is used to teach critical skills in clinical procedure and technique, as well as professional competence and compassionate patient care. Donated bodies become the student's first patient, through which they discover the incredible intricacies, pathologies and integrated functions of the human being. Thus, donors become an important part of the educational team, providing for an unmatched learning experience that forever impacts the study of medicine, not only for a generation of students, but for all of humanity.

"The unique experience to learn through our donor program is invaluable. As a novice beginning a difficult journey into medicine, this program illuminated the ultimate gift of education. It teaches, with utmost respect, a sense of humility for life's precious gift. A donor is our first patient and our first teacher. Their presence is a challenge for us to learn as much as we can. They teach lessons that will be carried forward throughout our careers. This gesture of pure generosity allows us to apply the knowledge we've gained to thousands of grateful patients we will encounter through our work in the medical field.

This gift helps us to better understand every aspect of the human body, not through words on paper or plastic models, but through someone who has faced the joys and difficulties that come with living life on this earth. It allows us to focus on the entire patient, in mind, body and spirit, as osteopathic medicine emphasizes. I cannot express enough heartfelt gratitude for the donors who provide us this opportunity."

~ Rachael S. Huwyler Wiig, WVSOM Class of 2019





The donation process

Donations may be made by individuals at any time before death or by authorized family members or other designees after death. In the case of postmortem donations, it is critical that the Human Gift Registry be contacted immediately after death.

Donated bodies are always treated with the utmost dignity and respect, and their use in the program is guided and regulated by the highest ethical standards. The identity of donors is kept strictly confidential. Students and faculty learn only the individual's age and cause of death as listed on the death certificate. Please be advised that we do not provide information on the cause of death to families and we do not perform autopsies.

SELF-REGISTRATION

Anyone 18 years or older may register as a donor by completing and submitting the enclosed Donor Registration and General Information forms. Additional forms are available by contacting the WVSOM Human Gift Registry coordinator at 304-647-6208 or 800-356-7836, ext. 6208. Donation forms may also be obtained through West Virginia University by calling 304-293-6322 or through Marshall University by calling 304-696-7382.

Donating one's body does not require any special legal procedure or attorney's services, nor must your intention to donate be included in your will. The completed, signed and witnessed Donor Registration Form is all that is required.

Once the Donor Registration Form is processed, you will receive an identification card that should be carried with you at all times.

Possible donation after death

Family members or other legally responsible individuals may choose to offer a body for donation after death, even if a donor form was not completed by the individual before death. In this case, a responsible individual must contact the Human Gift Registry immediately following death to verify criteria for possible acceptance before completing a relative release form. It is critical that this contact be made promptly.

Important considerations

DONATION IS NOT JUST AN INDIVIDUAL DECISION, BUT A FAMILY ONE AS WELL.

It is highly recommended that you discuss your donation plans with your family, clergy, physician, hospital, nursing staff, etc. as appropriate, so that they are not only aware of your wishes, but also understand them and may be prepared to notify the Human Gift Registry immediately upon death. Timing is very important — without advance notice of the donation directive, the reading of a will or discovery of donation papers may be too late for your donation to be accepted.

BODIES MAY BE DONATED TO A SPECIFIC INSTITUTION IN WEST VIRGINIA AND ALL REASONABLE EFFORTS WILL BE MADE TO HONOR THE WISHES OF THE DONOR.

However, under certain circumstances, the West Virginia Anatomical Board may, at its discretion, authorize the transfer of the body to any authorized institution.

The beliefs of most religions are consistent with the donation and use of one's body for the purpose of health and medical science education and research. Such a gift benefits the lives of future generations and is the ultimate embodiment of the humanitarian principles that are the foundation of most religions. Should you have any questions regarding the religious considerations of donation, consult with your spiritual advisor for guidance.

DONATED BODIES WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR TRADITIONAL FUNERAL SERVICES.

However, an appropriate memorial or religious service may take place at the discretion and convenience of the family without a body present. Arrangements and costs for such services are the responsibility of the family. Upon completion of study, donated bodies will be cremated and the ashes will be interred in the WVSOM memorial vault at Rosewood Cemetery in Lewisburg, W.Va. Ashes may be returned to the family if desired.

If you are already an organ/tissue donor, or are considering organ tissue donation, please be aware that the Human Gift Registry cannot accept bodies from which any organs have been removed at the time of death, with the exception of the corneas of the eyes. While we encourage organ and tissue donation for use in living recipients whenever possible, if organ donation is completed, the remainder of the body cannot be accepted by the Human Gift Registry.

In the event you change your mind and no longer wish to donate, you must notify the Human Gift Registry in writing and state in a signed document to the registry that you wish to revoke your earlier donation.

If you relocate out of the area, or have recently moved to West Virginia after having donated to another program, you may want to update your donation by retracting your donation to the original program and bequeathing your donation to another local institution.



“There is simply no substitute for the opportunity to learn from the miraculous and fascinating form of the human body. The clinical and procedural skills learned from the experience cannot be fully realized without the tremendous generosity of donors.

But, for many students, the donation provides more than just a valuable clinical educational experience. It also provides an equally important mental and emotional learning experience that enables them to develop the compassionate care skills required to be competent, caring physicians and deliver the highest quality of care possible.”

*~ Robert Fisk, Ph.D.,
WVSOM Professor Emeritis*

“For many individuals, the selfless act of donating their body for the advancement of medical education is a fitting tribute to the character and compassion of the donor. Many have been very giving, altruistic people during their time here on earth, and they so charitably chose to give this ultimate gift at the end of their life.

We are eternally indebted to and extremely grateful for the generosity of the donors and their families, especially considering the circumstances, of what is undoubtedly a difficult time for them. I hope it brings some comfort to the families that the donor’s their entire life and that through this gift, their legacy will live on.”

*~ James W. Nemitz, Ph.D., WVSOM president
and professor of anatomy*

Upon death of donor

At the time of death, the Human Gift Registry must be notified by phone immediately. Timely notification is essential to ensure proper handling for an acceptable donation. **A 24-hour answering service is in place to ensure prompt attention to the donation procedure.**

If the individual self-registered, no other forms are necessary. For family members or responsible individuals donating a body after death, a Relative Release Form will be sent to you for immediate completion.

All costs for reasonable transportation within 200 miles of the WVSOM will be provided for any body accepted for donation. A signed death certificate must be obtained from the funeral director, hospital, nursing home, medical examiner or other responsible party. Once this is obtained, the Human Gift Registry will make arrangements for pickup and transport.

Some medical conditions or circumstances may prevent the acceptance of a donated body at the time of death. Please contact the Human Gift Registry with any questions about specific medical conditions.

While whole-body donation does preclude the conducting of a traditional funeral service with the body present, it is appropriate and common to hold memorial or religious services to celebrate the donor’s life at a time that is convenient for the family.

Once clinical studies have been completed, the body will be properly cremated and the ashes will be interred at the institution’s memorial vault at the Rosewood Cemetery in Lewisburg, W.Va. If desired (as indicated on the donor form), donors may specifically designate a person to receive their ashes. While clinical studies on most bodies are completed within one year, in some cases it may take three years or longer before ashes are interred or returned to the family.

Honoring donors



Each year, WVSOM honors all donors from that year with an annual memorial service. Family members and friends are invited and welcomed at the service, which is attended by first-year medical students, faculty and members of the WVSOM community. It is a moving experience and provides an opportunity for students to express their appreciation for the donors to the donors' families. After the service, donor names are inscribed in memorial volumes housed in the WVSOM library, where family members may view them.

“As a lifelong teacher, Mom had a passion for education and she understood the importance of laboratory learning. Also, she and Dad both grew up during the Great Depression, despising waste and believing in what people now call ‘sustainable living.’

Mom decided that she wanted to donate her body to science, not only because of the educational value, but for practical reasons as well. In the days immediately after my father’s death 20 years earlier, our family had struggled to rush through the difficult experience of picking a casket and vault and making the other expensive decisions required by the funeral home during a time when we were all upset. When Mom later saw all those bills, she said that Dad would have been disappointed in the amount we had to pay for his funeral expenses, when this could have been better used to support college for their grandchildren.

Mom decided she wanted to donate her body to science, and made sure all of her children knew and agreed to support her decision. She wisely completed the paperwork years before her terminal diagnosis. She was pleased to learn that her several surgeries did not disqualify her from participating.

After Mom passed away, my husband just called WVSOM’s donation coordinator and they contacted the funeral home to retrieve her body. Everything was handled efficiently and professionally. Because of Mom’s wisdom and excellent planning, the days after her death were much less stressful than what we had faced in making Dad’s arrangements. Also, as she planned, Mom’s estate all went to her children and grandchildren and to causes she supported, rather than to the funeral home. Our costs were zero.

When a loved one is lost, the logistical details of funeral arrangements can overshadow your loss. Donation is not just a gift to education, but a gift to your heirs in relieving them from the logistical and financial burden of the funeral-home process. And it is one of the reasons I chose to become a donor myself.

Mom was the first person from her small hometown to have donated her body to education. When (as she asked) we held her memorial service at her home church a few weeks after her death, many of her friends and former students noted that this was typical of her giving and practical nature to have chosen this option.”

~ Helen Baker, Ph.D., WVSOM professor emeritus


Self-Registration Instructions

To make a body donation to the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine Human Gift Registry

1. Please complete the enclosed General Information and Donor Registration forms.

This information is necessary to complete the death certificate at the appropriate time and will be held in strict confidence according to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) guidelines. Please answer all questions if known. The second page should be signed and dated by the donor in the presence of two witnesses, who then should sign in the presence of the donor.

2. Mail the original signed and completed forms to:

Human Gift Registry, WV SOM 
400 Lee Street North
Lewisburg, WV 24901

After we receive and process the General Information and Donor Registration forms, the registry will send the donor an identification card that should be carried with them.

The donor should make sure that others (family members, clergy, physician, etc.) are aware of the gift and know how to notify the registry at the time of death.

When death occurs, a person having knowledge of the donor's decision should contact the Human Gift Registry at 304-647-6208. Outside normal office hours the call will be processed by a local funeral home that has a 24-hour answering service. It is essential to notify the registry as soon as possible to ensure that the body will be properly handled for donation. There are guidelines that must be verified for acceptance of each donation. A few of the questions that are asked that could exclude an acceptance include, but are not limited to:

- Was this an unattended death? (knowing the time of death is imperative due to the six-hour window to have a body placed in a morgue with cold storage).
- Does the deceased have any contagious diseases (AIDS, hepatitis, sepsis associated with isolating, SARS-COV2, etc.)?
- Has the deceased had surgery within the last three weeks?
- Does the deceased weigh over 200 pounds?

A signed death certificate must be obtained before the body can be transported. This certificate is normally provided by the funeral director, hospital, nursing home, medical examiner, etc.

The Human Gift Registry will arrange for appropriate transport of the body once the signed death certificate is obtained.

The donor must decide the disposition of their cremated remains. The donor may wish to have the ashes interred at the mausoleum/memorial gardens of the chosen Human Gift Registry, or specific individuals may be designated to receive the ashes after cremation. If specific individuals are designated, their willingness to receive the ashes should be confirmed at the time of donation. After the study period is completed (which could take up to three years), the registry will contact the first person on the list. If we are unable to make contact by phone, email or standard mail within 10 business days, the next person on the list will be contacted, and then the third person on the list. Designees have the right to decline to accept the ashes, in which case subsequent names on the list will be contacted. If none of the designated individuals agree to accept the ashes, the ashes will be permanently interred in the mausoleum/memorial gardens of the registry where the donation was made. Returning ashes is not a legal obligation; however, reasonable efforts will be made to comply with requests based upon our current guidelines.

In some circumstances, selected specimens, such as a lung, heart, kidney, etc., may be separated indefinitely for specific purposes such as special educational needs, unique anatomical patterns or demonstrations of diseases or surgical modifications. In such cases, the cadaver may be cremated without including the removed specimens. The separated cadaver could be retained permanently at the registry. The ultimate disposition will be conducted in a respectful and dignified manner.

If you have questions, please contact the Human Gift Registry at 304-647-6208, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:15 p.m., Monday-Friday.

The Human Gift Registry is **under no obligation to accept an anatomical gift and reserves the right to decline any donation.** We suggest having a backup plan in place.

General Information and Donor Registration Form

West Virginia Anatomical Board

Please complete these forms and return to the Human Gift Registry. This information is necessary in completing the death certificate and will be held in confidence according to HIPAA guidelines. Please answer all questions if known.

Name of donor _____
(PRINT OR TYPE) FULL LEGAL NAME (AS IT APPEARS ON SOCIAL SECURITY CARD) - FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST, AND MAIDEN NAME (IF APPLICABLE)

In the hope that I might help others, I hereby make this anatomical gift to take effect upon my death. I donate my body for anatomical study in the advancement of scientific medical education and research. This gift is made in accordance with the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission Anatomical Board, Title 133 Series 33.

DONOR INFORMATION

Date of birth _____ Place of birth _____ Age _____

Gender _____ Weight _____ Height _____ Social security number _____

State of residence _____ County _____ Within city limits _____ Yes _____ No

Marital status _____
(MARRIED, NEVER MARRIED, SINGLE, WIDOWED, DIVORCED)

Spouse's full name _____
(IF FEMALE, GIVE MAIDEN NAME)

Mother's name (first, middle, maiden) _____

Father's name (first, middle, last) _____

Race (American Indian, white, black, etc.) _____

Hispanic origin (yes or no) _____ If yes, specify country _____

Education completed - list highest completed (1-12) _____ College (1-4) _____ Other _____

Service in the U.S. armed forces _____ Yes _____ No If female, have you had a hysterectomy? ___ Full ___ Partial ___ None

Occupation (prior to retirement) _____

Kind of business or industry _____

List any known infectious diseases (HIV+, AIDS, hepatitis, tuberculosis, herpes, etc.) _____

Next of kin / Contact name _____

Contact person's street address _____

City, State, Zip code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

PREFERRED REGISTRY LOCATION (Check One)

____ West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (WVSOM): 304-647-6208, 400 Lee Street North - Lewisburg, WV 24901

____ West Virginia University: 304-293-6322, 4052 Health Sciences Center North - Morgantown, WV 26506

____ Marshall University: 304-696-7382, 1542 Spring Valley Drive - Huntington, WV 25704

REQUEST TO SEND INVITATION FOR MEMORIAL SERVICE

____ Please send an invitation for the annual Memorial Service (multiple family/friends may attend per single invitation)

Name (list one only) _____

Street address _____

City, State, Zip code _____

Phone _____ Email _____



I have read the information about body donations provided on the Human Gift Registry webpage and/or the Human Gift Registry brochure and understand and accept the following:

- I am donating my body for education and research to the West Virginia Anatomical Board and one of the Human Gift Registries at the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, West Virginia University or Marshall University.
- My body may be used at the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, West Virginia University, Marshall University or at another location within the state of West Virginia. The study period for my body could take up to three years.
- My ashes will be interred at the mausoleum for the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, West Virginia University or Marshall University, unless I specifically designate a person that I wish to receive my ashes.
- In some cases selected body parts could possibly be used for special educational/research needs and will not be included in my cremation.
- The Anatomical Board and the Human Gift Registries reserve the right to decline any donation for the reasons listed but not limited to the information pages. If the body is declined, the Anatomical Board and registries will not accept financial responsibility for the disposition of the body.

 DONOR AND WITNESSES MUST SIGN IN THE PRESENCE OF EACH OTHER

Name of Donor _____

(Print or type) Full legal name (as it appears on social security card) - First, middle, last and maiden name (if applicable)

Donor signature _____ **Date** _____

Phone _____ Social security number _____

Street address _____

City, State, Zip code _____

County _____

WITNESS 1

WITNESS 2

Signature _____

Date _____

Street address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Phone number _____

Designation of ashes - I direct the following disposition of my ashes:

_____ 1. To be placed in an urn in the mausoleum of the receiving institution and designated for permanent interment.

_____ 2. To be returned to one individual identified below (with the priority going from No. 1 name to No. 3 name).

1 Name _____

Relationship to donor _____

Street address _____

City, state, zip code _____

Phone number _____ Email _____

2 Name _____

Relationship to donor _____

Street address _____

City, state, zip code _____

Phone number _____ Email _____

3 NAME _____

Relationship to donor _____

Street address _____

City, state, zip code _____

Phone number _____ Email _____



Only individuals named by the donor will be allowed to receive ashes. If the registry is unable to make contact with any of the listed individuals, the ashes will be placed in the mausoleum. Distribution by the registry to individuals other than those named by the donor will require a court order.

Donor Signature _____ **Date** _____

The Human Gift Registry is **under no obligation to accept an anatomical gift and reserves the right to decline any donation.** We suggest having a backup plan in place.



Contact information

FOR QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE
WVSOM HUMAN GIFT REGISTRY OR DONATION
PROCEDURES, PLEASE CONTACT THE FOLLOWING:

**West Virginia School of
Osteopathic Medicine
Human Gift Registry**
400 Lee Street North
Lewisburg, WV 24901

Phone: 304.647.6208 or
800-356-7836, ext. 6208

Office hours 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Monday-Friday

wvsom.edu/giving/human-gift

OTHER WEST VIRGINIA PROGRAMS:

West Virginia University

Human Gift Registry

4052 Health Sciences Center North
PO Box 9131

Morgantown, WV 26506

Phone: 304-293-6322

medicine.hsc.wvu.edu/anatomy/human-gift-registry

Marshall University School of Medicine

Human Gift Registry

1542 Spring Valley Drive

Huntington, WV 25704

Phone: 304-696-7382

jcesom.marshall.edu/hgr

*“What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we
have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.”*

~ Albert Pike, 19th-century author and lawyer



PASS IT ON

West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine
Human Gift Registry
400 Lee Street North
Lewisburg, WV 24901

wvsom.edu/giving/human-gift

