

# *How to Find a Living Donor*

**A Toolkit for Champions**

*A journey you don't make alone.*



**UPMC**  
LIFE CHANGING MEDICINE





# About This Toolkit

Finding a living donor is a journey. This life-saving procedure is made possible in part by advancements in medicine. But every procedure depends on the compassion of people who are willing to share their lives to save those in need.

This booklet will act as a guide to understanding living donor transplants. Not only does it cover how the process works, it takes a closer look at the role of an often overlooked, but highly important participant in this lifesaving journey — the Champion.

## The Benefits of a Living Donor Champion

A Champion may be a friend, family member, coworker, or anyone else who is willing to provide emotional support for someone on the transplant waiting list.

Asking someone to become a living donor is a challenge and can be an overwhelming task. With the help of a living donor Champion, finding a donor becomes more manageable.



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For additional support and to connect with other Champions, join the Living Donor Champion Support Group.

Visit [Facebook.com/Groups/LivingDonorChampion](https://www.facebook.com/Groups/LivingDonorChampion).



# Step 1

## Understanding the Living Donation Process

### *Justin's Story*

Justin has given the gift of life – twice. When his father needed a kidney, Justin was evaluated and determined to be a match. He made the selfless decision to save his father's life by becoming his living donor. Two years later, he made the almost-unheard of decision to give the gift of life a second time by donating a portion of his liver to someone he had never met. Whenever anyone asks him why he did it, his answer is simple: "Why not?"



*“People are always looking for the miracles, but what if we are the miracles?”*

**Courtney Bost**

Living donor for her husband



### Learning about Living Donation

Many people on the liver or kidney transplant waiting list think that they must remain on the transplant waiting list until a deceased donor organ becomes available. But, there is another option: living donation.

As a Champion for a loved one, you will need to know as much about the procedure as you can. We'll start with the basics and dive a little deeper with both liver and kidney transplants.

### Living-Donor Liver Transplant

There are thousands of people on the waiting list for a liver transplant. Unfortunately, many people waiting on the list won't receive a transplant in time because there are not enough deceased-donor livers available.

Because the liver can regenerate, or regrow, living-liver donation is possible — and a lifesaving alternative to waiting on the list.

### Living-Donor Kidney Transplant

Advances in surgery and care allow people to donate a kidney to help relatives, friends, or even strangers in need of a transplant. Having a living-kidney donor can help a patient avoid the typical wait times of up to several years for a deceased-donor kidney.

Kidney transplants are also made possible through living-donor kidney exchange. An exchange has the potential to save and improve the lives of people facing kidney failure.

### Benefits of Living Donation

There are benefits for both the recipient and the donor.

#### For the recipient:

- Increases the existing overall organ supply, helping to save more of the men, women, and children who are currently waiting for lifesaving transplants.
- Reduces the time on the waiting list.
- Shortens the time on the waiting list for other people in need.
- Improves odds of long-term recovery by allowing the surgery to be performed before the condition worsens, when the recipient is healthier.
- Allows for the surgery to be scheduled at a time that is convenient for both the donor and the recipient.

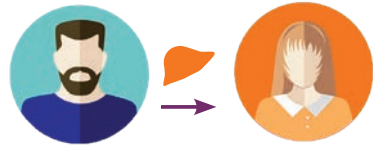
#### For the donor:

- Provides the opportunity to save a life.
- Gives the opportunity to contribute to the recipient's life — and the lives of the recipient's loved ones — in a very meaningful and lifelong way.

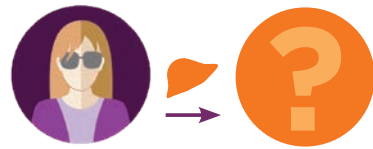
## Types of Living Donation

There are three categories of living donation:

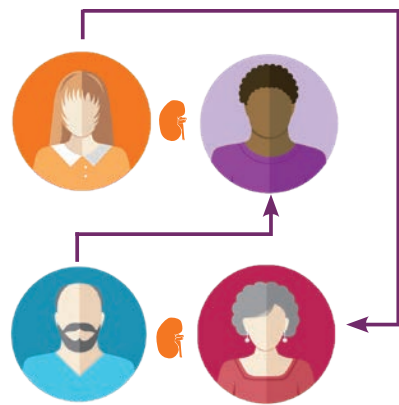
- **Directed Donation:** This is when the donor specifically chooses who will receive their living donation.



- **Non-Directed Donation:** This is when the donor is neither related to or known by the person in need. The recipient is determined primarily by medical compatibility.



- **Paired Donations (Kidney Only):** This involves at least two pairs of living-kidney donors and transplant candidates who do not have matching blood types. The transplant candidates “trade” donors so that each recipient receives a kidney from the donor with a compatible blood type.



If the UPMC Transplant Selection Committee has medically approved a person for a liver or kidney transplant, he or she should begin talking to family and friends about living donation. The transplant process can start when a potential donor fills out the online registration form and identifies the patient as their intended recipient. The coordinator will then gather information about the potential donor and answer questions. The evaluation is then scheduled for the donor candidate over the course of a few days.

To register, people interested in becoming a living donor can visit [livingdonorreg.upmc.com](http://livingdonorreg.upmc.com).

## Requirements of Living Donation

To be an ideal living donor, a person must meet the following criteria:

### Age



**18-60**  
years old



**18-75**  
years old

### Health

The person must be in good general health and have no history of:



Liver disease



Diabetes



Heart disease




Cancers or other diseases that could complicate the surgery

**It's important to note that recovery times may vary.**

If someone is unsure if he or she qualifies as a living donor, the transplant team can help determine if that person would be a good match.

### Motivation



The main reason for donating must be an unselfish desire to help the person in need. Because it is illegal to buy or sell organs, there is absolutely no financial compensation that can come as a result of it.

## What Happens During a Living-Donor Liver Transplant

During a living-donor liver transplant, a portion of the liver from a healthy donor is removed and transplanted into the recipient.

The potential donor is carefully evaluated before the surgery to determine if he or she can tolerate the operation, and if the one in need will benefit from the donor liver. The evaluation includes:


- A screening phone call with a living donor coordinator
- Diagnostic tests like chest X-rays and blood work
- Physical and psychological exams
- Consults with an anesthesiologist, a liver or kidney specialist, and a transplant surgeon
- A meeting with an independent living donor advocate

## Liver Transplant Process


Here's what to expect:

- 1

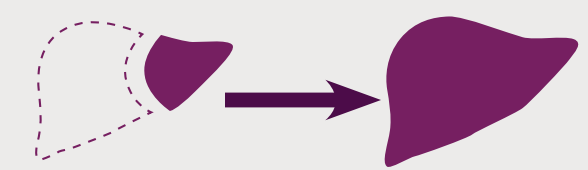
The surgeon will remove 25% to 65% of the donor's liver.


- 2

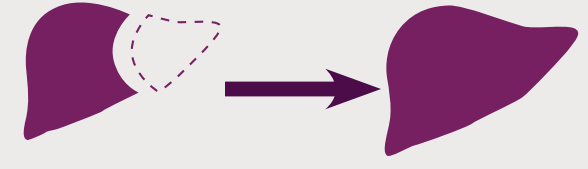
The recipient's unhealthy liver will be replaced with a portion of the donor's healthy liver.




- 3

The donor's liver regenerates.



The recipient's liver regenerates.



The coordinator or surgeon will be able to provide more details about a candidate's specific surgery.

The need for living-liver donors is a big one. 30 million Americans have some form of liver disease.



↑ = 1 million people

## Recovery for Living-Donor Liver Transplant




The liver is one of the few organs that can regenerate. It usually takes about eight to ten weeks for it to grow back to full size. The full recovery of the donor generally takes a few months before he or she is back to his or her previous level of health. **However, it's important to note that recovery times after living-donor liver transplants may vary.**

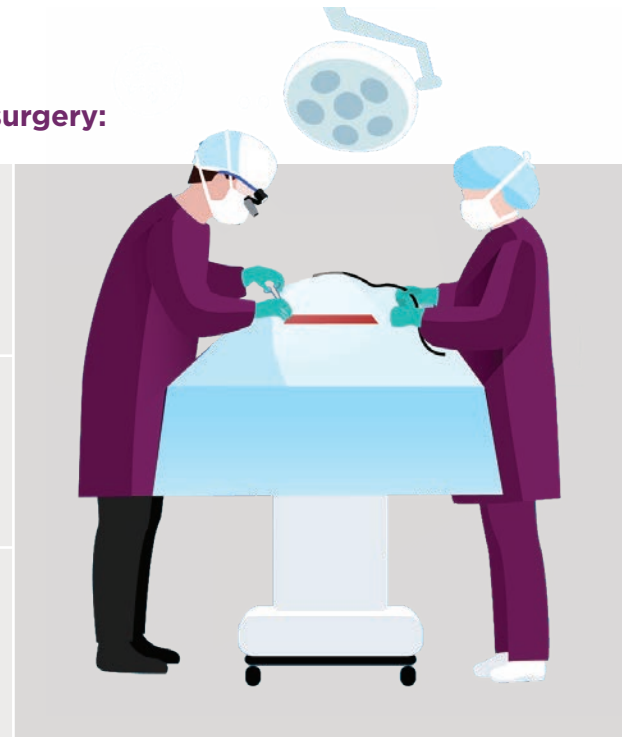
## What Happens During a Living-Donor Kidney Transplant

During a living-donor kidney transplant, a healthy kidney from a living donor is removed and transplanted into someone in kidney failure. In most cases, the donor kidney is removed during a minimally invasive procedure that involves making several small incisions in the abdomen.

### Kidney Transplant Process

Here is what to expect during this minimally-invasive kidney surgery:

- 1** Surgeons insert a mini camera — called a laparoscope — into the abdomen through tiny incisions. 
- 2** The camera allows them to visualize and locate the kidney before removing it through a relatively small incision (about three inches). 
- 3** The entire operation takes around three hours. 



### Recovery for Living-Donor Kidney Transplant

Most kidney donors spend one or two days in the hospital to recover. However, we understand that everyone recovers differently, so our kidney transplant team works with each donor to provide a personalized treatment plan that meets their needs after surgery. The full recovery of the donor typically takes a few months before he or she is back to his or her previous level of health and can go back to work. **But again, it's important to note that recovery times after living-donor kidney transplants may vary.**



Living donation is not as rare as you might think.

# 47%

of all transplanted organs in the U.S. are from living donors.



A living-donor kidney transplant has the potential to offer a better life sooner to the more than 26 million Americans with kidney disease and the nearly 3 million who may have type 1 diabetes.

## John and Marcella's Story

John spent decades working as a deputy sheriff with polycystic kidney disease before he went into kidney failure. At the sheriff's office, none of his 240 fellow deputies knew he was sick. They only learned how serious his illness was after he started to prepare for dialysis. One of the deputies and a close friend of John's, Marcella, immediately offered to become his living donor. She has five children, all adults now, but she knew she could not go through it without their blessing. They didn't hesitate to support her, so Marcella was the first person to be evaluated for John, and she was a match!



On your transplant journey, you are not alone. The people traveling this road with you include:

- The person waiting for a transplant
- The donor
- The caregiver (if he or she is someone other than you)
- Champion partners (family, friends, and others who volunteer their time and effort in helping you)
- The UPMC Living Donor Transplant Team



## Step 2

Why You're On This Journey

## Kathy and Jeremy's Story

As mother and son, Kathy and Jeremy have always been close. So after they learned she would need a liver transplant, he didn't think twice. Luckily, he was a perfect match. A few months later, Kathy was able to stand by Jeremy's side and dance with him at his wedding. Today, the two have recovered from the transplant and are doing well. Both also believe that more people need to be aware of living donor transplants.

**Regardless of the type of living donor transplant that is performed, one of the major benefits for the person in need is that it reduces time spent on the waiting list.**



*“The Champion Program was wonderful in the fact that it gave Joe’s need for a living donor a voice.”*

**Pam St. Clair**

Champion for her husband, Joe, about how the Champion program made it easier for her to talk to potential donors



**The Champion**

Now that you understand the living donor transplant process, let’s talk about your role as the Champion.

When a loved one is waiting for a transplant, every moment is critical. Many people will want to support this person’s journey. But it is the Champion who plays perhaps the most crucial role, which includes:

- **Spreading the word about living donation, which includes sharing the donor registration link whenever possible**
- **Offering support and motivation for your loved one waiting for a transplant**
- **Reaching out to as many people as possible to find a living donor**
- **Providing direction and motivation throughout the journey**

The Champion is so vital to the person in need of a transplant because:

- **The person in need of a transplant is often too sick — and in the case of a child, too young — to take on this task and must concentrate on staying as healthy as possible.**
- **It is often emotionally difficult for someone who needs a transplant to share their story and ask for help.**
- **Without a living donor, the patient will likely wait longer to receive a transplant and continue to get sicker.**

Your task as the Champion will be to spread the word as far as you can and to reach as many eyes, ears, and above all, hearts as possible.

It will require you to keep an open mind, since an offer from a potential donor could come when you least expect it. On the other hand, you may also need to be patient, as a potential donor might not immediately come forward.

Remember that not everyone will be able to be a living donor. However, everyone can still contribute greatly to this journey by becoming a Champion partner. And not only can they still help, they may want to help. Some of the ways they can continue to make a positive impact on behalf of your loved one include:

- **Becoming an advocate**
- **Sharing their story**
- **Helping the person in need and/or you with anything involved in finding a donor**

In other words, being a Champion for someone in need can be a challenge. So, you should be prepared to fully commit yourself to this journey. However, doing so could have a profoundly positive impact not only on the life you’re helping to save, but on yours as well.



## Frank and Erica's Story

What would you do for a loved one who was in need of an organ transplant? How far would you go? For one daughter, the answer was simple.

Former DEA agent, Frank, was suffering from end-stage liver disease and needed a lifesaving liver transplant. After being placed on the liver transplant waiting list, he and his wife were introduced to the UPMC Living Donor Champion Program. As a loving father and husband, Frank was hesitant to ask anyone to make the sacrifice and become his living donor. After learning more about living donation, he decided to talk to his family about it.

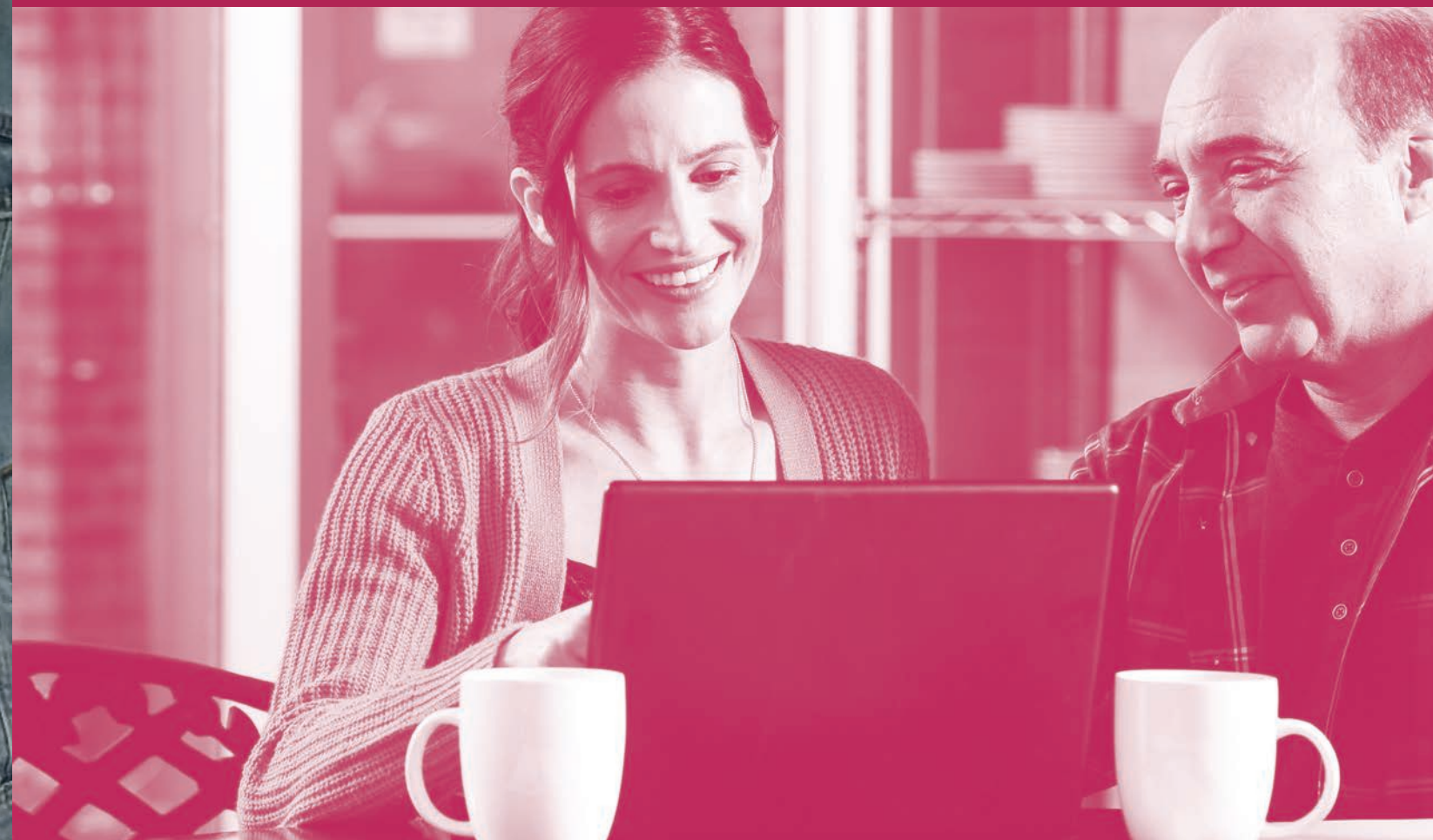
His daughter, Erica, couldn't imagine losing her father. When she learned that she could donate part of her liver, she immediately jumped at the chance to save his life, essentially telling him she would do it no matter what.

After a successful living-donor liver transplant, Frank and Erica are both back to their healthy and active lifestyles. Without the UPMC Living Donor Champion Program, Frank never would have asked a family member to donate to him, but now he and Erica share something that brings them even closer together than before.



## Step 3

### Starting the Conversation About Living Donation



*“It’s all about helping somebody that’s really in need. No amount of money can fix them, but you have something that will. I had what would fix my mom, and that’s pretty powerful.”*

**Kenny Bloor**

Living donor for his mom



### **Bringing Up Living Donation**

Asking someone to be a living donor is a highly emotional request for both the person in need and the donor. For someone waiting for a lifesaving transplant, concerns might include stress or guilt about relying on others for help, the medical risks associated with it, or how he or she will feel if a potential donor doesn’t follow through with the screening process. Other concerns might involve the possible rejection of the organ, how to possibly thank someone for being a living donor, or if there will be any impact on the relationship with the donor.

With that in mind, it might help if you shift your thinking when asking a potential donor. In other words, don’t simply ask someone to donate an organ. Rather, present the situation and offer up the option of living donation. Instead of asking others to be a living donor, share it as an update. See page 22 for tips on crafting your message.

A good place to start is by making sure you’ve assembled all of the information you will need to share with potential donors in order to find a living donor. This includes:

- **The person’s story and why he or she needs help.**
- **General facts and information about living donation.**
- **Photos of the person in need. Showing your loved one in a healthier state is a more positive way to convey why you’re doing this. Let people know that it is not too late to help.**
- **A reliable contact list. Start with the people closest to the person in need. Also include a point person from the transplant center to handle any questions you might have throughout this journey.**

**It’s a good idea to start by sharing your loved one’s story with people you both feel comfortable talking to.**



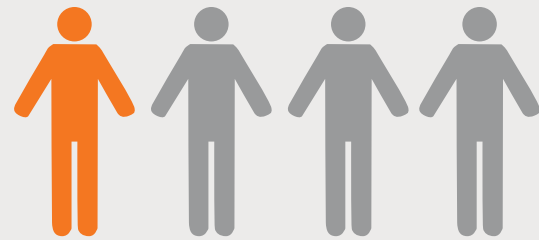
## Joe and Barb's Story

Joe suffered from elevated liver enzymes and needed a lifesaving liver transplant. His wife, Pam, wanted to help him find a living donor, but didn't know how to begin. After attending a Living Donor Champion Workshop to learn about the best way to find a donor, she set up a Facebook page to spread Joe's story as far as she could.

That page caught the eye of his cousin, Barb. She lived four hours away and had three boys but still traveled from her home in Virginia to be evaluated as a potential living donor.

After a successful living-donor liver transplant, Joe was back to his active lifestyle of kayaking and fishing within a few months. Barb is thankful for the Champion Program giving Joe a chance to get his story out there, allowing her to step up and save his life.

Since only about **one in four people** evaluated for living donation are eligible candidates, it's important to talk with as many friends and family members as possible.



**Chances are the living donor will come from someone who is familiar to you and your loved one rather than from someone who isn't.**

## Step 4

Resources for Finding a Living Donor



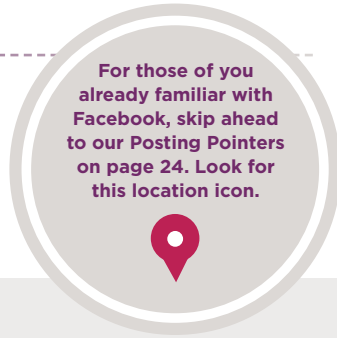
To be an effective Champion, you'll need to use as many channels as possible. This section will explore different resources that can help you spread the word about your loved one's need further and more efficiently.

## Social Media

While social media has long been a tool for sharing pictures or personal stories, it is also a growing resource for finding the help people need for some of life's heavier issues. The most popular and effective social media platform regarding this type of request is Facebook. We'll take a look at how that site can help you the most in your role as the Champion.

### Creating a Facebook Page

If you don't have a personal Facebook profile, you'll need to set one up. Don't worry, it's simple and free of charge.

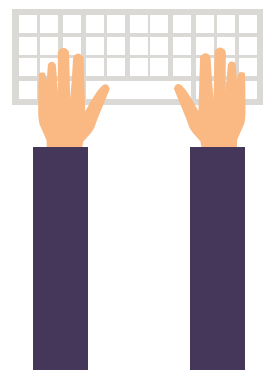


- 1 Go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).
- 2 If you see the sign-up form, fill out your name, your email address or phone number, a password that you've created and will be able to remember, your birthday, and your gender. If you don't see the form, click **Sign Up**, then fill out the form.
- 3 Click **Sign Up**.

When it comes to your contact list, start with those that are close to the person needing a transplant — this may take a little digging.



Once you sign up, you'll need to confirm your email address or phone number. Facebook will then send you either an email or a text message to help you confirm your account. After your page is set up, you can begin requesting friends. We strongly suggest you start with, and keep to, family and friends you know and trust.



### Creating a Group Page

If you don't want to use your personal Facebook page in your search for a donor, you can create a group Facebook page specifically for that purpose. Again, it's fairly simple and free of charge. Here's what you do:

- 1 Click the down arrow in the top right of Facebook and select **Create Group**.
- 2 Fill in your group name, those you want to add to your group, and then choose the privacy setting for your group.
- 3 Click **Create**.

Facebook remains a great way to get your message out to your connections, as well as the connections of your connections.

### Making the Group Easy to Remember

Once you've created a Facebook group page, you can develop an easy-to-remember web address. To create a customized web address for a group that you manage:

- 1 Go to your group and click the ellipses (...) in the top right corner and then select **Edit Group Settings**.
- 2 Next to Web and Email Address, click **Customize Address**.
- 3 Enter an address for your group. The address can't have special characters and can only include letters, numbers, and a period (ex. FindPaulALiver).
- 4 Click **Customize Address**. This will also create a customized email address that matches the web address.
- 5 If the address you choose is available, it will become your web and group email. If it's taken, you can choose a different address.

**Please note:** Once you customize your web and email address, you won't be able to change it.

## Getting Started

Now that you've set up your Facebook page and know some of the tools that are there to help you, it's time to make your first post. This is when you'll first tell your loved one's story and ask for help. Here are a few tips for crafting one, as well as some examples to help inspire you.

**Whether you make this appeal through social media or in person, it should follow this outline, but in your own style.**

**AN OPENING:**

Convey your desire to start an important conversation, and include the reassurance to the potential donor that he or she will not have to make any decisions as a result of it.

**THE WHO:**

Explain for whom you're making this request.

**THE WHAT:**

Provide a brief summary of the medical condition that is requiring this transplant.

**THE WHY:**

Offer the reason why a transplant is necessary.

**THE WHEN:**

Include a sense of urgency as well as how much time a living donor might need to invest.

**A CLOSE:**

Ask the potential donor to take the time to think about it, and if he or she is interested in helping, offer ways to contact you for more information. Always mention the recipient's full first and last name, along with the donor registration site, [livingdonorreg.upmc.com](http://livingdonorreg.upmc.com).

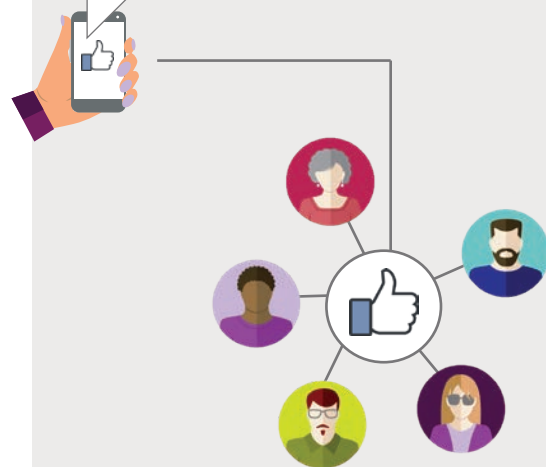
**If you're new to Facebook, keep in mind that the more you use it, the more comfortable you'll be with it. In other words, be patient with your own learning curve.**

### "Initial Appeal" Post

**Group Name**

Okay, here goes – a life-changing request if there ever was any. You all know my dad, Paul. You may also know he has been very sick with liver cancer. Well, we just found out that he will need a liver transplant. This was tough to hear, but he is hopeful and determined to beat this. We know it's a lot to ask, but would anyone be interested in learning more about being his living donor? Simply put, we need someone soon who is a match and is willing to donate a piece of his or her liver in order to save his life. Anyone interested in living donation should sign up to donate to Paul Smith at [livingdonorreg.upmc.com](http://livingdonorreg.upmc.com). Please help us to share this message!

Like Comment Share

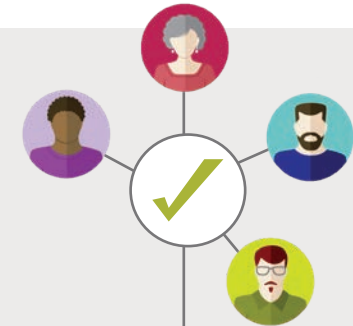


### "Update" Post

**Group Name**

Hi everyone! Thank you for all the love and support. It certainly means a lot to our family. My dad is headed back to the hospital for some more tests, but his spirits are up. The search is still on for his living donor. A few people have been tested, but we have not found a match yet. Please continue to share that interested donors should register for Paul Smith at [livingdonorreg.upmc.com](http://livingdonorreg.upmc.com).

Like Comment Share

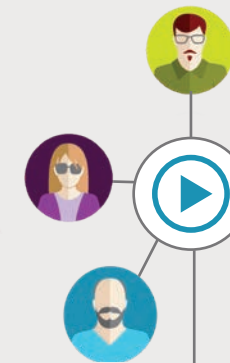


### "Life Event" Post

**Group Name**

We celebrated dad's 64th today. A great time was had by all. He's still in great spirits as the search for a living donor continues. He's even started talking about where to hold his 65th. Let's find someone to help make it happen. Anyone interested in living donation should sign up at [livingdonorreg.upmc.com](http://livingdonorreg.upmc.com) and enter Paul Smith as the recipient.

Like Comment Share



### "Found a Donor" Post

**Group Name**

A match has been found! Thank you all so much for your help over the past few months. We are so excited. We are in the process of scheduling his surgery and will let everyone know how it goes.

Like Comment Share



## Posting Pointers



The most important thing to remember when posting is to keep people emotionally invested. Be sure to create the content in your own style, always stay positive, and use these simple tips and tools when documenting this journey to help sustain interest in your story.

### Posting Suggestions



**Photos** – Whether they're of fond memories or recent progress, people love them.



**Motivational Posts** – Keep everybody's spirits up, including yours.



**Videos** – More movement than photos – and possibly more moving.



**Personal Experiences** – Share stories about what your loved one is doing beyond this challenge (vacations, good days, etc.) to show that there is so much more life to live.



**Shares & Likes** – “Share” or “like” someone else's story of a loved one in need and there's a good chance they'll do the same with yours. Also, don't be afraid to take the initiative and encourage people, in a friendly way, to like your page or share your posts.



**Tags** – Tell your story to more than just your friends. Tell it to your friends' friends.



**Responses** – Show your appreciation to those who are participating to whatever extent in helping you to find a donor.



**Livestream** – Talk to others and answer their questions (almost) face to face.



**Acknowledgements** – Let others know how individuals have been there for you, no matter how large or small the deed.



**Hashtags** – Create catalogues of this challenge so folks can easily find out what's going on.

### How Often and How Long



**2 to 3 posts per week** – Less than that and people might lose interest. More than that and they may feel overwhelmed.



**Keep it short** – A post below 250 characters is great. A post below 80 characters is even better.

**Note:** Don't feel like you need to use all of these. You can just stick to those with which you are most familiar.

### Facebook Help Center

If you still have any questions or concerns that this toolkit doesn't cover regarding Facebook, the site has a comprehensive Help Center that covers most issues. Just go to the “down arrow” button on the right-hand side of the toolbar on your page, click on it, and scroll down to “Help.” From there, search for answers to questions or scroll down to “Visit the Help Center.”

## Join Us on Facebook

### Living Donor Champion Support Group

Another resource on Facebook is the Living Donor Champion Support Group. As a member of the group you will:

- Learn more about living donation
- Meet and hear stories from other Champions
- Converse with patients on the transplant waiting list and hear from UPMC experts

Please visit [Facebook.com/Groups/LivingDonorChampion](https://www.facebook.com/Groups/LivingDonorChampion) to join the group.

### UPMC & Donate Life: Living Donor Transplant Facebook page

Visit the **UPMC & Donate Life: Living-Donor Transplant** Facebook page for continuing education about living donation and to keep up to date with the UPMC Living Donor Program.

## Recommendations for Security

To keep your privacy during this process, it's important to be selective about what you share. Here are some of the things you should avoid posting when using social media:

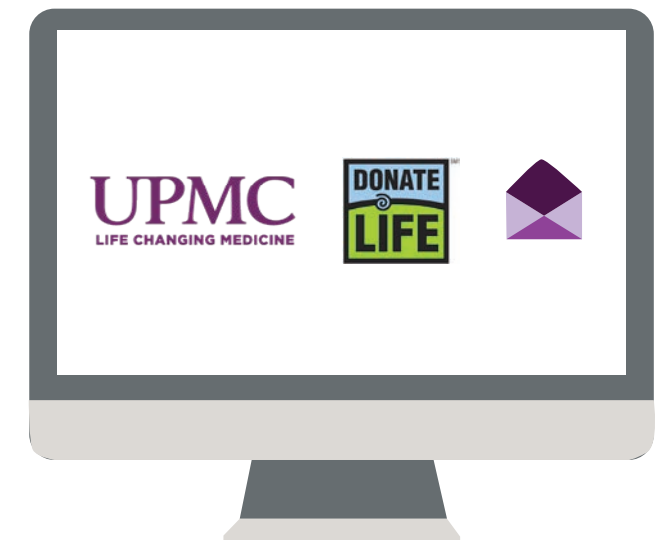
- Personal phone numbers
- Residential addresses
- Personal email addresses
- Family information
- Inappropriate photos
- Any other information that might be considered sensitive

Remember to be respectful of everyone's right to privacy. If there is any doubt whatsoever about if you should post something or not, always be cautious and don't post it.

## Online Resources

While social media is an effective tool for finding information and getting the word out, it's not the only one you have. There are others inside the digital world that can help, including:

- [UPMC.com/LivingDonor](https://www.upmc.com/LivingDonor)
- The Donate Life America website, [DonateLife.net](https://www.donatelife.net)
- The Center for Organ Recovery & Education (CORE) website, [CORE.org](https://www.core.org)
- Email and text messages – This can help spread the word through specific people you know. Addressing people through email and/or text is a way to guarantee that they'll at least know about your loved one's need.



An additional benefit to using email is that you can create a specific address that directly relates to this journey (example: [FindPaulALiver@\\_\\_\\_\\_.com](mailto:FindPaulALiver@____.com)). This can be beneficial in a few ways:

- It helps keep your personal email account private. You can provide that email to those trying to contact you instead of your personal one.
- It makes the process more manageable for you by not clogging up your personal or business email inbox.
- It can act as an avenue to and from Facebook.
- It's eye catching and easier for people to remember.
- It creates an official appearance.

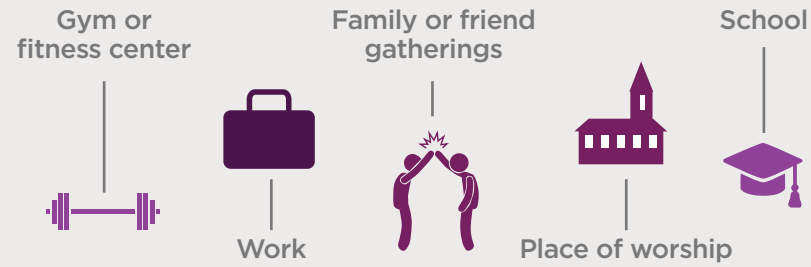
## Non-Digital Resources

### Word of Mouth

Whether it's the occasional phone call with a family member or friend, or bumping into someone familiar at the grocery store, any time spent with someone is another opportunity to further the journey to find a suitable donor.

### Social Groups

Regular gatherings, such as book clubs, recreational sports leagues, religious groups, alumni groups, etc., keep those with whom you share a common connection informed and up-to-date on what is happening with the person in need of the transplant.



### Non-digital mediums



- Local traditional media (i.e. television, radio, print, etc.)
- Pamphlets
- T-shirts
- Business cards
- Car magnets
- Yard signs
- Tote bags

### UPMC Living Donor Information Session

As a Living Donor Champion, your job is to provide support for the person in need throughout the entire journey and encourage others to register as living donors.

Share your loved one's story by hosting a Living Donor Information Session in his or her community. You can invite family members, friends, and neighbors to learn about your loved one's need for a living-donor liver transplant, the donation process, and the criteria and steps to becoming a living donor.

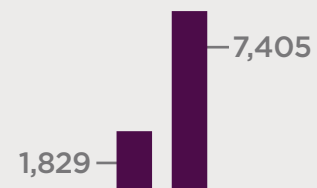
To help make your event a success, the UPMC Living Donor Transplant team will provide:

- Material to help plan and promote your event
- Talking points and background information about living donor transplants
- Information regarding how to register to become a living donor for anyone who would like to help

In addition, a member of the UPMC Living Donor Transplant team will attend your event to provide education and answer questions about the living donation process.

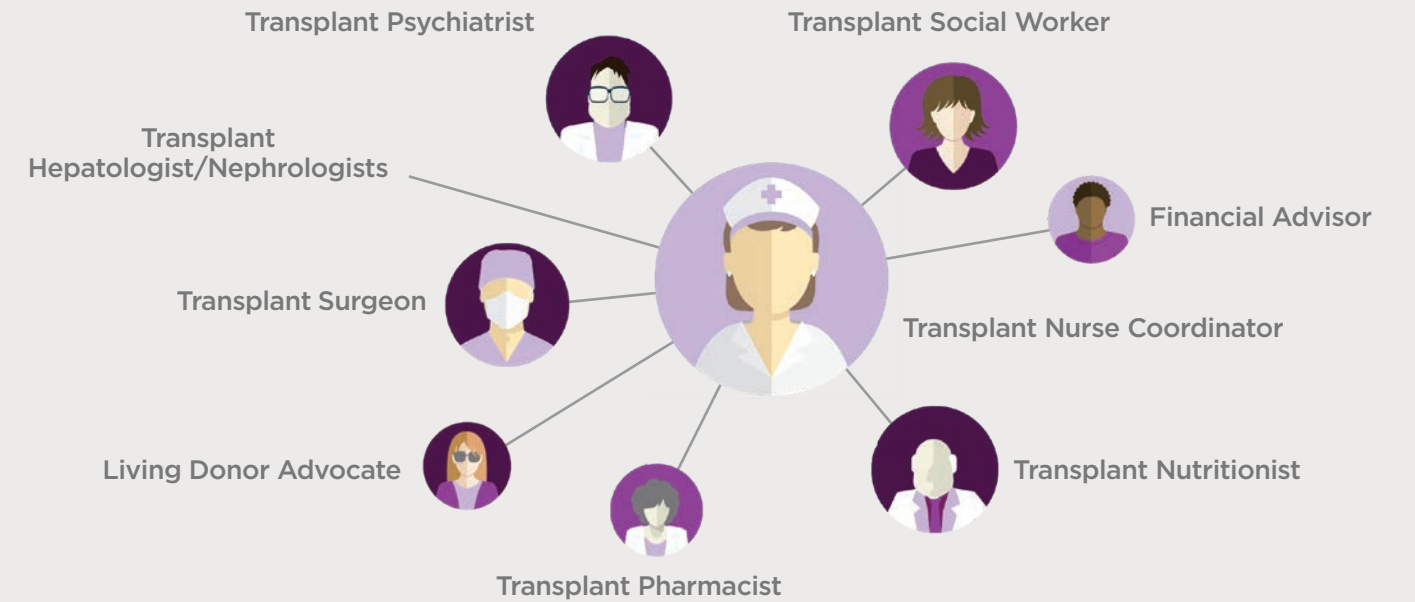
For more information, visit [UPMC.com/LivingDonorCommunity](https://www.upmc.com/LivingDonorCommunity).

In 1988, there were only 1,829 living donations performed in the U.S. By 2020, that number had grown to 7,405.



Source: Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

### The Living Donor Transplant Team



Being a Champion is a rewarding, but potentially difficult process. We hope this toolkit is a helpful resource in helping you find a living donor for your loved one.

**Stay positive all along the way and never stop sharing their story!**

# Five Tips for Speaking with Your Local Media About Living Donation



As you begin sharing your story and speaking to your community about living donation, you may catch the attention of local media. Sharing your need for a living donor with local media can be an effective way to raise awareness of living donation and to identify a potential donor.

The media — which includes print newspapers, local TV stations, radio shows, documentaries, and online media outlets — will report your story without charging you.

To work effectively with your local media, keep in mind these **five tips**.



## 1 Reach Out to Local Outlets

To engage with local media, the first step is to find someone to contact. There's no standard method of contact, but there are a few typical routes:

- Find a local outlet's contact page and call either their general contact number or their tip-line number.
- Perform an internet search for living donation stories from your local media and write down the names of the reporters and the organizations they work for. On the organization's website, find contact info for that reporter and send them an email or give them a call.
- If you have a friend who had a similar story covered in local media, ask them for the contact information of the reporter who wrote/covered the story.

Many reporters are actively searching for local stories and will likely be receptive to your call or email. But, avoid reaching out to reporters through social media, because many reporters consider those accounts personal and may not want to use them for professional activities.

## 2 Do Your Research

When a reporter contacts you, ask some background questions before agreeing to an interview. You'll want to know their name and organization, what area of news they typically cover, and background about the type of story they are working on. Your goal is to understand the perspective they will take in the story. If they give an answer that you do not understand, ask follow-up questions for clarification.

Finally, ask when they plan to print or air the story and what they need from you. Knowing the answers to these basic questions will help you take full advantage of this opportunity and develop a relevant message.

## 3 Prepare and Practice Your Message

Excluding social media, there are three main types of media outlets: print, TV, and radio. Each type takes a different form and has a different audience, requiring different skills.

For print pieces, remember to speak clearly and slowly. When speaking out loud, you use physical cues to help others understand your meaning. But, people are going to be reading your quotes, so it's best to slow down and say precisely what you mean. On TV, you'll do best if you speak in short sentences, keep your demeanor positive, and pay attention to your appearance since your audience will be able to see you. On radio, your audience will only hear your voice, so it's important to speak clearly and to keep complex statistics to a minimum. Be sure to include the spelling of the recipient's first and last name and the website to register to be a living donor ([livingdonorreg.upmc.com](http://livingdonorreg.upmc.com)) so that the audience can take action.

Before you participate in an interview, write down two or three short, clear sentences that convey the key points you want your audience to understand. Practice saying these points out loud, but don't memorize them. You want to come across as natural.

Emphasize the main points you wrote down by using language that focuses the listener's attention, such as the following:

- What's important is ...
- The main message I want to communicate is ...
- The reality is ....

## 4 Only Answer Questions You Feel Comfortable Answering

As reporters develop questions for interviews, they try to be as thorough as possible. Because of this, they may ask questions you feel uncomfortable answering, questions that feel too personal for you or your loved one, or ones that are too technical.

If you don't know the answer to a question, be honest about it. Don't be afraid to decline to answer. When answering any question, remember to speak only for yourself.

## 5 Share Your Story

Once the reporter has completed your story and posted it online as an article, video, or sound clip, treat it as a new opportunity to share your story through social media. Post a link to it on your Facebook page with a caption that thanks the reporter for helping you share your story and that once again shares your loved-one's need for a transplant in a positive way. Share the story at work, in social settings like school and church, and anywhere else you want your loved one's story heard.

It's possible that a local media story will be that last push you need to find your loved one a living donor.

For general inquiries about living donation, members of the media may contact **Andrea Kunicky at UPMC Media Relations by calling 412-552-7448 or emailing [kunickya@upmc.edu](mailto:kunickya@upmc.edu).**









## Help is here.

If you have identified a potential donor, please visit **[UPMC.com/LivingDonor](https://www.upmc.com/LivingDonor)** and click “Register to be a Living Donor”

For any questions about the UPMC Living Donor Champion Program or to download a digital copy of the Champion toolkit, visit **[UPMC.com/LivingDonorChampion](https://www.upmc.com/LivingDonorChampion)**.

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