

Brook Dramatizes Need For Human Organ, Tissue Donors

Special To The Post

The real-life drama of little Joshua Brook's fight for life dramatized the critical need for human organ and tissue donors. The Laurinburg infant died in December following complications from a liver transplant, but North Carolina's feeling for Joshua and his family has sparked statewide interest in organ donations.

In an effort to create more public awareness of the urgent need for organ and tissue donations and to encourage people to become potential donors, Governor Jim Hunt, in cooperation with the National Kidney Foundation, has declared the week of March 4-10 as "Organ Donor Week" in North Carolina.

Ben Shepard, who manages the Organ Donation

Program for the N.C. Department of Human Resources said increased public awareness is important because the waiting list for organ transplants far exceeds the number of organs donated.

"In 1982, there were 130 kidney and 330 cornea transplants performed in this state. However, there are now 250 North Carolinians waiting for a kidney transplant and over 200 in need of a cornea transplant," Shepard said.

In 1979, the Division of Health Services and the N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles began a cooperative campaign to increase the number of people willing to be organ or tissue donors at the time of their deaths. A Uniform Donor Card was included with license renewal reminders mailed to drivers in North

Carolina.

Shepard said that more than 86,000 drivers agreed to be organ donors in 1982, but this represented only 8½ percent of the people who were issued driver's licenses that year.

"Despite the increase in donors over the past few years and the expected rise when 1983 figures are available, there are not nearly enough potential donors.

Stamey was miserable during that year. "I was

just existing, that's all," he said. Dialysis was inconvenient because I not only had to travel to and from Duke, but had to remain on the dialysis machine for several hours each visit. My diet was extremely limited and I still felt bad. It was no way to live."

In 1976, Stamey faced a critical decision - remain on dialysis for the rest of his life or accept his younger brother's offer to donate a kidney. Stamey decided to risk the kidney

transplant

"It's been eight years since my brother gave me the gift of life. Without that transplant, I would have been dead a long time ago. Now I lead an active, normal life," he said.

Stamey takes medication which keeps his body from rejecting the transplanted kidney. The medicine sometimes causes his skin to bruise easily, but he has no other side effects.

Stamey said that his own experience as a transplant

patient emphasized the critical need for organ and tissue donors.

"I was very fortunate to have someone in my own family who was willing to donate a kidney. Many people are less fortunate and must wait a long time before a suitable donor is found. For some, time runs out," he said.

Stamey, who has agreed to be an organ donor at the time of his death, says he will be able to give the gift of life to someone else.

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