

Encouraging Others to #LivTwice

by Justin Phelps, Mid-America Transplant

Volunteering

Angela Rose feels a responsibility to raise awareness for organ, eye and tissue donation. It stems from a conversation with her daughter in 2013. Olivia “Liv” Didway had just received her first driver’s license. At 16 years old, she said “yes” when asked if she wished to join the organ and tissue donor registry. Later, Olivia talked with her mother about her decision. “It was important enough for Olivia to have the conversation with me and make the decision to be an organ donor,” Angela said. “She had a heart for it. And then she was able to be an organ donor. So not only do I want to share her story, but I want to help save lives like she did; even if it’s indirectly by sharing her story.”

Olivia was 17 years old the summer before her senior year at Republic High School. She was friendly and energetic, made friends with everyone and had a genuine heart; she was a very giving person. She was a runner and liked old movies and photography. On June 27, 2014, a tragic vehicle accident took her life and Olivia’s decision to be a donor gave the Gift of Life to others. Today, Angela shares Olivia’s story and the message of organ and tissue donation as a volunteer for Mid-America Transplant. “We never ask people to join the registry,” Angela said. “That’s our goal, but we don’t ask. We just ask people to have the conversation at home.”

Angela has reached thousands of people throughout southwest Missouri. She has appeared on several radio and television programs and her story has been featured in local newspapers. “Angela Rose has a level of bravery and courage that not many have,” said Mid-America Transplant’s Tara Skaggs. “I learned this when she made the decision to honor Olivia’s wishes to save lives through organ and tissue donation, and I continue to see it when she speaks to the community in honor of her beautiful daughter. She is relentless in her pursuit of continuing Olivia’s legacy by inspiring thought and conversation on organ and tissue donation. I’m proud to know her.”

At each event, Angela includes a poster-sized picture of Olivia (right) before her junior prom. It’s a joyful image of a young woman in an emerald green formal dress showing a big smile. “It’s her so alive and vibrant,” Angela said. “It puts a face to the name, but it also checks their spirit and their heart. If it happened to her, it could happen to anyone, so I need to make a decision. It makes people realize life is fragile.”

In April of 2015, Angela started the Liv for Life 5K Run/Walk, held during National Donate Life Month. “Olivia was a runner,” said Angela, whose family uses the hashtag #LivTwice online to raise awareness about Olivia. “She was in track. She won several medals. She loved to run. A 5K just seemed like a no brainer.” More than 400 people attend the race each year. Proceeds fund a college scholarship given in Olivia’s name to a high school senior in southwest Missouri.

All of Angela’s efforts – from speaking engagements to the 5K to the scholarship – are driven by Olivia’s legacy. “I didn’t want Olivia to be another statistic,” she said. “I didn’t want her to be that poor, beautiful girl from Republic who passed away. No, I wanted people to remember her.”

