

Mother shares her experience with donation and correspondence

by Jason Noland, Saving Sight

Over the years, Carol from Sunrise Beach, Mo., has generously volunteered several times to share her experience as the mother of a donor. She tells a powerful story about her son Mark who became a cornea donor in 2010. Her son's heroic decision to donate impacted the lives of two cornea recipients as well as Carol and the rest of Mark's family. Carol tells of the therapeutic effects of knowing her son has helped others, including how she has corresponded with the recipients. She encourages others to consider donation and correspondence because it changes lives for the better.

When someone loses a loved one, it's difficult to find the good in such a heartbreaking situation. Yet it gives many families a sense of hope. And when those families hear from their loved one's recipients, it's particularly rewarding.

In 2010, Carol lost her 30-year-old son, Mark. Unbeknownst to the family, Mark had made the pledge to become an eye donor through Missouri's first-person consent registry—a choice that didn't surprise Carol.

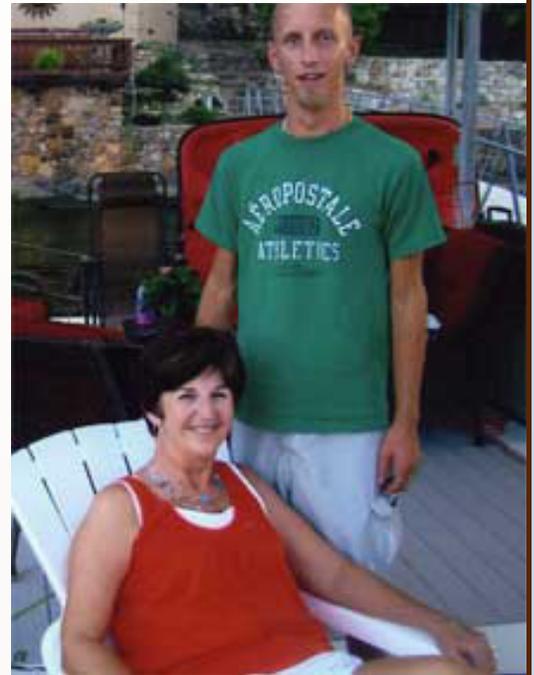
Mark's corneas had been provided to two recipients in California.

"Mark was absolutely the most loving person that we know in our family," she said. "He cared very much about his family—about everybody. He didn't know a stranger. Mark was never judgmental, gave everybody a fair chance and always tried to help the underdog."

As Carol and her family moved through the grieving process, they received a letter from Saving Sight informing them that Mark's corneas had been provided to two recipients in California. Carol wrote the recipients, introducing them to her son, and soon received letters back from both individuals. One recipient in particular struck a chord with Carol, and the two began corresponding frequently.

"I can't say enough about how his words have helped me," said Carol. "This man just amazes me. Even in his last letter, he said, 'Mark and I had our stitches removed and the good doctor says our vision continues to improve. We are a good fit. There was a moment or two I did feel Mark was there.' He couldn't have said anything better to me." Carol has read letters from Mark's cornea recipient to fellow church members, helping them to find hope in desperate situations and encouraging them to follow Mark's lead by pledging to become eye, organ and tissue donors through Missouri's donor registry.

For Carol, Saving Sight's correspondence program has made a difference, and therefore, she urges donor families and recipients alike to consider writing their own letters. "I know Mark is living through this gentleman. I feel he has Mark in the palm of his hand like another grandpa, and it gives me such a comforting feeling. This man was so generous in his thoughts and words back to my family."



Carol and Mark