

Hillcrest learner encourages public to support Sharks organ donor campaign

The public is encouraged to sign up as organ donors.



April 9, 2015

Matthew Legemaate, Willem Alberts, Samantha Nicholls (CEO of the Organ Donor Foundation) and Belinda Moolman (transplant coordinator).

For Hillcrest High School learner, Matthew Legemaate, the Sharks Forever Fans initiative is an exciting and extremely important campaign and one that touches him personally.

Matthew, who suffers from Pulmonary Hypertension and is waiting for a heart and bi-lateral lung transplant, was invited to the launch of the new initiative on 31 March, the aim of which is to raise awareness for organ donation.

The Sharks players, who have all signed up as organ donors, played in the specially-designed jerseys on Saturday, 4 April and encouraged fans at the game to sign up as organ donors as well. The jerseys will be auctioned off afterwards in order to raise funds for the Organ Donor Foundation.

“I was really excited to be invited to the launch of Forever Fans, as the Sharks have always been my heroes. Knowing that they are trying to bring awareness to something like organ donation made it even more special. I was pleased to find out that they had all registered as organ donors,” said Matthew.

Matthew was also invited along to the game to support the Sharks. “I would have loved the Sharks to have won their game and I was disappointed, but I loved being there for the experience. They will always be my team.”

With approximately 4 300 people waiting for transplants in South Africa, and less than 0.3 per cent of the population registered donors (with KZN having the least registered donors), this initiative gives hope to many people waiting for an organ transplant.

Janet Legemaate, Matthew’s mother, said, “We are really proud of the Sharks for the initiative and their aim to bring awareness to organ donation. Using their brand does in itself bring awareness, and with the partnership with the Organ Donor Foundation this should have a ripple effect.

“For us as parents of a child requiring a heart and bi-lateral lung transplant this has so much significance. None of us know how our paths in life will pan out, and it could so easily be you or I needing that transplant right now.”

Matthew is encouraging the public to get behind the initiative. “Becoming an organ donor is a special gift that you may give at least seven people one day. Leaving a legacy like that is something to be proud of. I am a registered organ donor, and when I receive my transplant we are hoping that some of the valves in my heart will be used to help others.

“I would love KZN to go from having the least registered organ donors to the most registered organ donors in South Africa.”

To find out more about the Sharks Forever Fans initiative go to www.foreverfans.co.za or to find out how you could become an organ donor, visit www.odf.org.za.



AUTHOR



Kerry Ibbetson
Journalist

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