

## -+Newspaper article

### Give the gift of Life

#### Blurb: Mom encourages South Africans to register as organ donors

HILLCREST High pupil, Matthew Legemaate has fought for life since he was born. Just 36 hours after his birth, his parent's, Brian and Janet were informed that their infant had Tetralogy of Fallots and severe Pulmonary Atresia, a congenital heart defect, which required immediate open heart surgery.

The survival rate of this condition in an infant is rare however Matthew was born with a fighting spirit. For the last eighteen years and after four further open heart surgeries his body is still fighting to stay alive. At the age of 10 years, was found to have a life threatening lung conditions. As a result he has been on permanent oxygen and on the transplant list to have a heart and double lung transplant for the last five years. He remains a very positive young man who passionately raises awareness about organ donation whenever he can.

Janet said that as a mom she often watches her son struggle with physical activity and tiredness and feels helpless. But she also knows that God has a plan for his future.

Matthew and his mom, are using his situation to help raise awareness about organ donation and to get people to talk about it. There are a minimum of 4300 people on the organ transplant waiting list in South Africa. Sadly, only 0.3 percent of South Africans are registered as donors and donor referrals have declined significantly in the last 13 years in KZN. In 2002 a total of 115 solid organ transplants were done in KZN, and in 2014 a total of 18 solid organ transplants were done. The decline in donor referrals and transplants is significant.

What we all fail to realise is that we never know when it will be us who is in need of a heart, lung, kidney, liver, pancreas, heart valve, skin, cornea or bone transplant. All that is needed is for us to contract a virus that affects our heart, to become ill with a disease that affects an organ, or have an accident which causes us to require an organ or tissue transplant. We just have to think of the number of people whose gift of sight is restored by a cornea transplant to realise how worthwhile organ and tissue transplantation is. As simplistic as this may seem, I often ask people, you needed a transplant, would you accept one? If your answer to that is yes, then surely you need to consider being willing to donate your organs when you no longer need them? It takes one willing donor to possibly save seven people's lives and alter 50 other people's lives.

Janet urged the community to discuss organ donation and register to become donors. Speaking to the Hillcrest Fever, Matthew said that he will not give up as he still has goals he wants to achieve and things he wants to do. "I will continue to aspire to be the best I can be in whatever I do, and I am determined to enjoy my life. I do want to urge South Africans to be donors, as it will be saving lives in need," said Matthew.

August is Organ Donor Awareness month and for the first time in a couple of years the Organ Donor Foundation will host a Proud 2b and Organ Donor 5km Awareness

Walk along the beach front. To learn more about the walk, or about being an organ donor contact [www.odf.org.za](http://www.odf.org.za).

Matthew's story can be followed on

[www.facebook.com/MatthewsJourneycomealongforthedrive](https://www.facebook.com/MatthewsJourneycomealongforthedrive)

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