

New England Donor Services Donate Life Scholars Program

Scholar Handbook, Calendar & Toolkit
2026–2027

Educate. Inspire. Save Lives.



New England
Donor Services
Organ and Tissue Donation

WELCOME, NEDS DONATE LIFE SCHOLARS!

You are part of a program created to give high school students accurate information about organ and tissue donation and transplantation, connect you with people whose lives have been touched by donation, and give you practical ways to share information with your own school community.

This handbook is designed to help you throughout the school year. The first part explains the program, your role, and the principles that should guide your work. The Activity Toolkit provides practical ideas, templates, talking points, and planning tools you can use when you begin carrying out activities at your school.

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

- Use it as a reference rather than something you need to memorize.
- Review the calendar and monthly activities.
- When you are not sure about a fact, message, or question someone has asked you, contact NEDS rather than guessing.
- Return to the calendar and activity ideas throughout the year.

AT A GLANCE

What is the program called?	NEDS Donate Life Scholars Program
Who runs the program?	New England Donor Services
What's the program's goal?	To educate students about organ and tissue donation
Who's participating in the program?	79 Scholars in 35 high schools in New England
How long is the program?	September through May
What will Scholars do?	Attend a Program Kickoff Meeting by Zoom Coordinate donation awareness activities at school Attend a 1-hour Zoom meeting each month Complete a Scholar self-reflection assignment Attend a Recognition Ceremony by Zoom
What will Scholars receive?	Program planning and leadership experience Community service hours Scholarship award Program certificate

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PROGRAM WEBSITE

<https://neds.org/high-school-scholar-program/>
<https://neds.org/>

STAYING IN TOUCH

Program communications, reminders, activity information, and resources will be sent to you throughout the year. Check those messages regularly and respond when information is requested. If you are stuck, need materials, encounter a school-approval problem, or receive a question you cannot answer, ask for help early.

ABOUT NEW ENGLAND DONOR SERVICES (NEDS)

Mission: To save and heal lives through organ and tissue donation.

Who We Are

New England Donor Services (NEDS) is a nonprofit organ procurement organization serving communities across New England. We work with hospitals, donor families, transplant programs, healthcare professionals, and community partners to make organ and tissue donation possible.

What We Do

When a person may have the opportunity to become an organ donor, NEDS helps coordinate the donation process. Our work includes evaluating donation opportunities, supporting donor families, coordinating with hospitals and transplant programs, and helping donated organs reach patients who are waiting for a transplant. NEDS is also involved in tissue donation, which can improve the lives of many more people.

Our work does not begin and end in hospitals. Education is an important part of the NEDS mission. We want people throughout New England to understand donation, have accurate information, talk about it with their families and friends, and be able to make an informed decision about donor registration.

Our 6-State Community

The Donate Life Scholars program brings together students from Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. As Scholars, you extend NEDS' educational reach into schools and peer networks across the region.

How Donate Life Scholars Fit the NEDS Mission

NEDS staff can provide education throughout New England, but students have something especially valuable: access to your own school communities and an understanding of how your peers communicate, learn, and engage. The Scholars Program gives you accurate information and support, then invites you to create thoughtful opportunities for donation education in settings where you already belong.

Your role is to bring accurate, thoughtful information into places NEDS cannot reach as effectively on its own: your schools and peer networks.

YOUR ROLE AS A NEDS DONATE LIFE SCHOLAR

Learn

Build your knowledge about organ and tissue donation and transplantation.

- Participate in monthly virtual (Zoom) Scholar meetings.
- Learn from NEDS staff, guest speakers, donor families, transplant recipients, healthcare professionals, and one another.
- Ask questions and become comfortable distinguishing accurate information from myths and misunderstandings.
- Use reliable NEDS and Donate Life America resources when preparing school activities.

Lead

Develop leadership skills, engage your peers, and champion donation education in your school.

- Connect with a teacher, guidance counselor, or school administrator who can help you navigate your school's approval process.
- Work with other Donate Life Scholars at your school when applicable.
- Plan and carry out monthly school-based donation education and awareness activities during the school year.
- Share ideas, challenges, and lessons learned with the larger Scholar cohort during monthly Zoom meetings.

Make an Impact

Start conversations, raise awareness, and help peers make an informed choice about donor registration.

- Create opportunities for students to learn something new about organ and tissue donation.
- Help correct common myths and misunderstandings.
- Encourage thoughtful conversations among students and families.
- Pay attention to the questions and concerns you hear so NEDS can better understand what matters to young people.

Your Program Commitment

Start conversations, raise awareness, and help peers make an informed choice about donor registration.

School activities or challenges	Complete monthly donation education or awareness activities during the school year – one per month, as directed by NEDS
Monthly Zoom meetings	Attend one of the two 1-hour Zoom sessions offered each month. Both sessions cover the same material
Activity reports	Complete and submit a short form after each school activity so we can understand what you did, lessons learned, challenges, and program reach and impact
Self-reflection	Complete a self-reflection assignment about your experience in the program and what you got out of it
Communication	Read program messages, meet deadlines, and respond when information is requested
Closing celebration	Participate in the 1-hour virtual Zoom recognition event in May

Educate – Don't Pressure

One of the most important things to understand about being a NEDS Donate Life Scholar is that your role is not to pressure people into registering as organ donors. We are not asking you to argue with classmates, tell them what decision they should make, or judge anyone who chooses differently. Everyone can make their own choice, and that choice should be respected.

When Someone Has a Strong Opinion

You may meet students, teachers, or others who have strong opinions about donation. That is normal. Your job is not to win an argument. Listen, stay respectful, share accurate information when it is helpful, and recognize that people may reach different personal decisions.

When You Don't Know the Answer

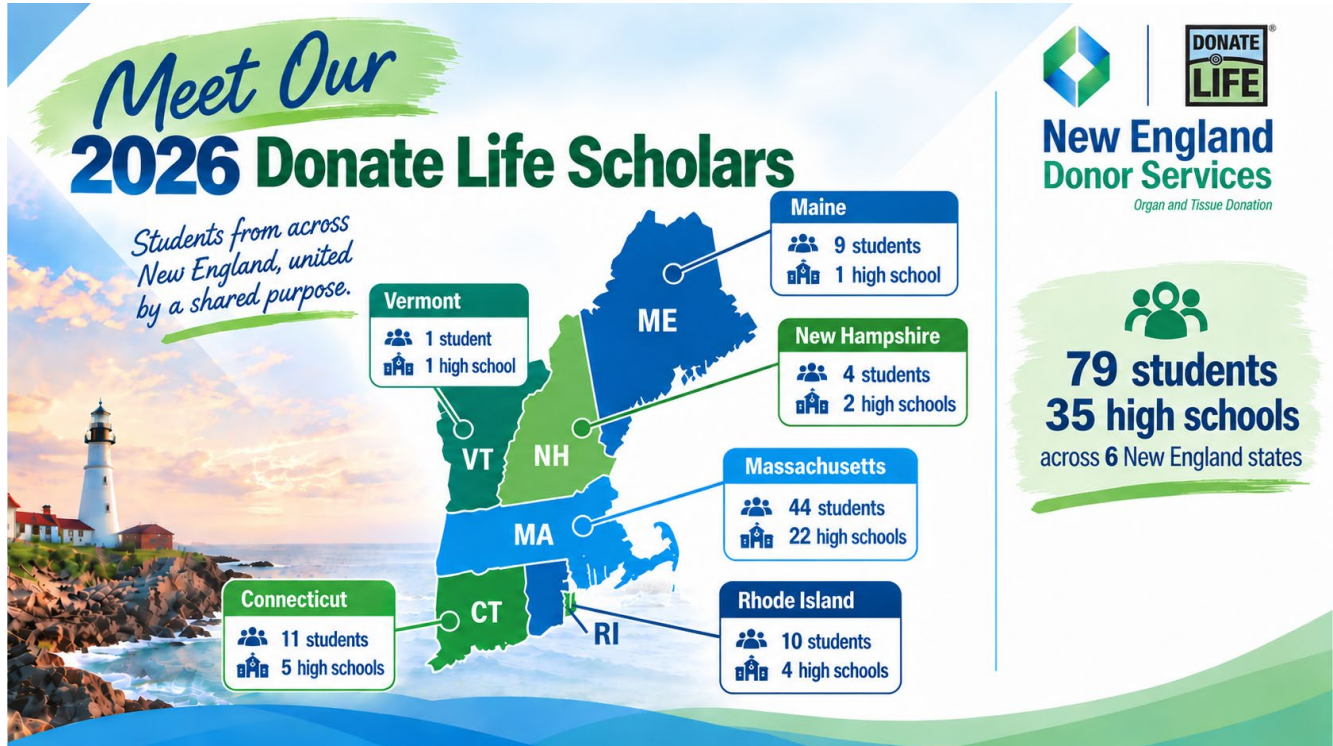
You will get questions you do not know how to answer. That's completely okay; it happens in donation education every day. The best response is to be honest. Write down the question and email Mariah or text her for a more immediate answer. Being trustworthy is more important than having an answer to every question in the moment.

What Success Looks Like

Success is not measured by how many other students are convinced to register as donors. A successful Scholar activity helps people leave knowing more than they did before, gives them accurate information, and creates space for respectful conversation.

Educate | Inspire | Save Lives

2026-2027 NEDS DONATE LIFE SCHOLARS



State (6)	Students (79)	High Schools (35)
Connecticut	11	Canton High School (1), Hamden High School (2), Kingswood Oxford High School (1), Weaver High School (2), Wethersfield High School (5)
Maine	9	Portland High School (9)
Massachusetts	44	Beaver Country Day School (2), Belmont High School (1), Brockton High School (1), Brookline High School (9), Cardinal Spellman High School (1), Catholic Memorial (1), Chelsea High School (2), Concord-Carlisle High School (1), Dexter Southfield High School (1), Holliston High School (1), Hudson High School (1), Ipswich High School (1), Lexington High School (1), Newton South High School (2), Reading High School (3), Revere High School (1), Shrewsbury High School (1), Stoughton High School (2), Tantasqua Regional High School (1), Waltham High School (9), Watertown High School (1), Westwood High School (1)
New Hampshire	4	Manchester Memorial High School (3), Nashua High School South (1)
Rhode Island	10	Chariho High School (3), Cranston High School East (5), Highlander Charter School (1), Portsmouth Abbey School (1)
Vermont	1	Mount Anthony Union High School (1)

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION: THE BASICS

As a NEDS Donate Life Scholar, you do not need to become a medical expert. You do need a strong foundation in the basic facts about donation and transplantation so that you can communicate accurately, recognize some common misunderstandings, and know when to ask NEDS for help.

Donate Life America (DLA) Helpful Resources

The Donate Life America resources that follow are your go-to reference materials throughout the Scholars Program. They give you a quick overview of what organs and tissues can be donated; key donation facts and commonly asked questions; some myths and accurate responses; information about the National Donate Life Registry; suggestions for starting conversations about donation with others; and examples of the many careers involved in donation and transplantation. Keep these materials handy. Use them to build your own knowledge, prepare for your school activities, check facts before sharing information, and help answer questions. Again, if you are asked something these materials do not answer, don't guess. Reach out to Mariah and she'll help you find an accurate answer.

Visit www.donatelife.net for more information and resources

A Note About Donor Registration

As a NEDS Donate Life Scholar, we encourage you to let your friends and classmates know that they can register their decision to be an organ, eye, and tissue donor when they get their learner's permit or driver's license. But they don't have to wait for the DMV.

Young people ages 15–17 can register their intent to be donors right now through the National Donate Life Registry at RegisterMe.org. We especially encourage you to share this option because it gives students an immediate, easy way to record their decision rather than waiting until their next DMV visit. Adults 18 and older can also register on this secure website.

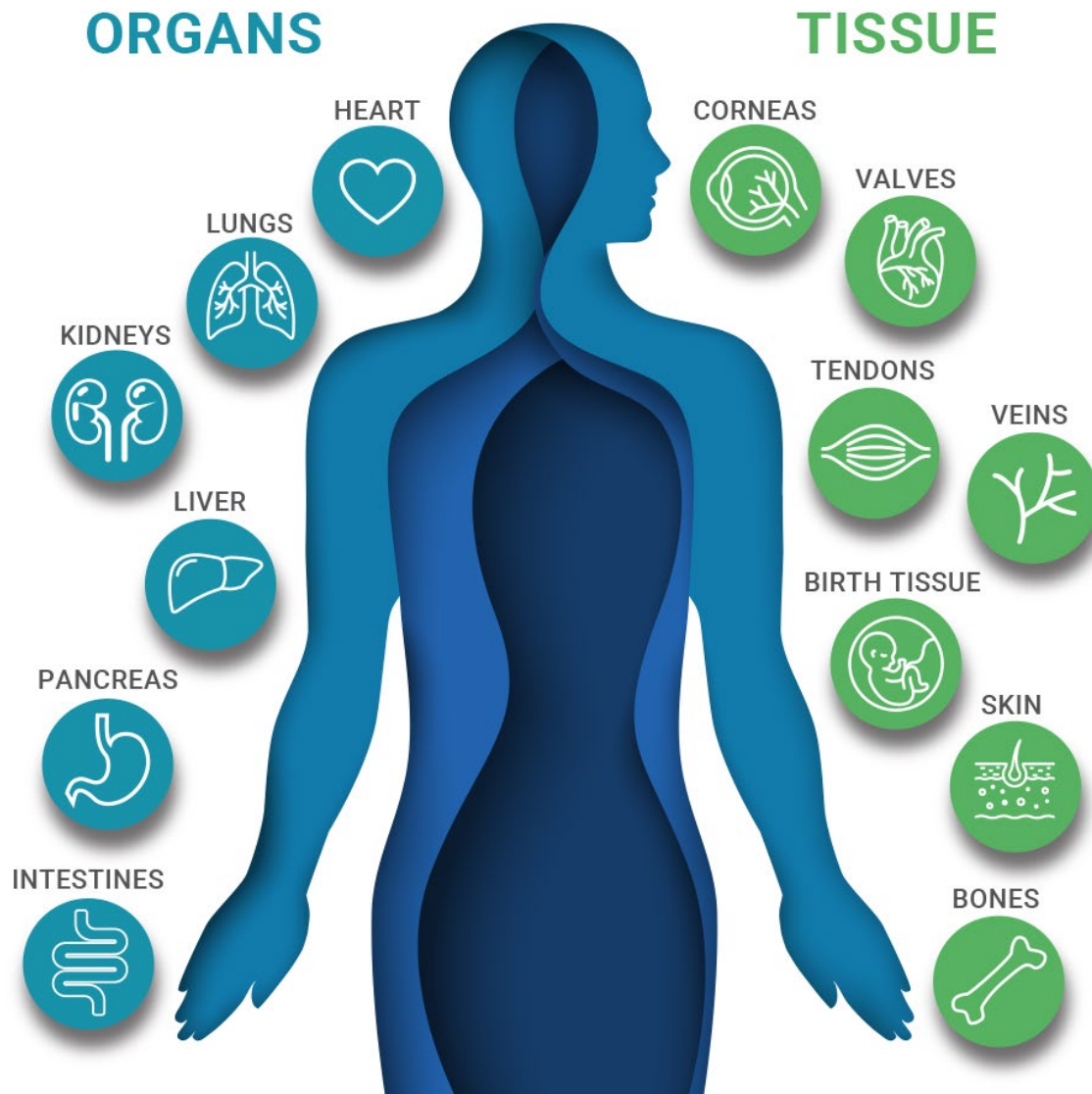
For those under age 18, it's important to understand that a parent or legal guardian makes the final donation decision, so registering is also a great opportunity to talk with your family about your wishes. Remember, your job is to make sure your peers know their options and have accurate information so they can make their own informed decision.

DONATE LIFE AMERICA

MATERIALS



WHAT CAN BE DONATED?





ORGAN DONATION: MYTHS VS. FACTS

With more than 100,000 people waiting for a lifesaving transplant, registering your decision to be a donor is a selfless gift that brings incredible hope to those waiting.

It's important to understand what it means to be a registered donor, so let's debunk some common myths about organ, eye and tissue donation.

MYTH	FACT
Doctors won't work as hard to save my life if I'm a registered donor	 Doctors work hard to save every patient's life. The medical team responsible for your care does not know your donor status and functions independently from the donation team. Organ donation only proceeds after every lifesaving effort has failed and death has been declared.
I'm too old or unhealthy to donate	People of all ages and medical histories can be potential donors. A medical evaluation by donation professionals will determine what organs and tissues can be donated at the time of death.
Wealthy or famous people get transplants faster	 The national organ matching system is based on medical factors like urgency and compatibility, never on income or social status. Recognizing that access to healthcare is not always equal, Donate Life America is an advocate for solutions to ensure all communities have access to this lifesaving gift.
The organ donation system is not safe or regulated	Organ donation and transplantation in the United States is a world - leading system. Federal agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), provide significant oversight to ensure patient safety, transparency, and quality care.
My family can override my decision to donate	 When you register as a donor, your decision is legally protected under the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act — meaning your gift is honored, even if your family feels differently. That's the power of registering. And while your choice is legally binding, we still encourage you to share it with your loved ones, so they understand your wishes and can find comfort in knowing you made this decision with intention. You can also update or remove your donor registration at any time.
You cannot opt out of organ donation once you have registered	Your decision to be a donor is voluntary and can be updated at any time. Your donor registration is yours to manage, and how you access it depends on where you originally signed up. • Registered through MyChart or on your iPhone? Go to RegisterMe.org and click "Access Your Registration." • Registered at the DMV? Contact your state registry for help. <i>*Residents of AL, MS, and KY should go RegisterMe.org. These states' DMV data is in the National Donate Life Registry.</i>



THE NUMBERS

Donate LifeSM is the national symbol for the cause of organ, eye and tissue donation.

The Need is Great

More than **100,000** people are waiting for lifesaving organ transplants.



More than **49,000** organ transplants from 23,788 donors brought new life to patients and their families in 2025.



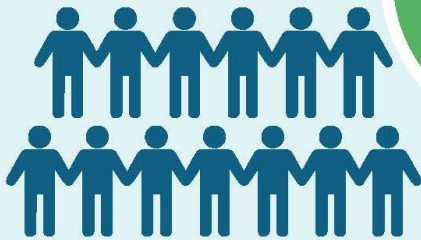
Every **8** minutes another person is added to the waiting list.

More than **85,900** corneal transplants helped to restore sight.



Did You Know?

60% of organ, eye and tissue donors are authorized by registries.



13 people die each day because the organs they need are not donated in time.



More than **170 million** people are registered organ, eye and tissue donors. Thank you to all donors, donor families, registered donors and champions of the Donate Life cause!

Pediatric Donation and Transplantation

More than **2,200** children under the age of 18 are on the national transplant waiting list.



More than **1,874** children were saved by the generosity of donors and donor families in 2025.

Deceased Donation



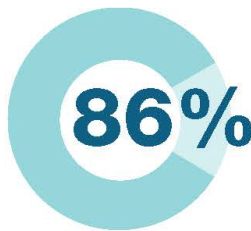
1 Organ, Eye and Tissue Donor

Saves
up to
8
lives

Restores
sight to
2
people

Heals the lives
of more than
75
people

Living Donation



of patients waiting
are in need
of a kidney.



Living donors can
provide a kidney or a
portion of their liver to
a waiting patient.*

*Living donation is not included
in your donor registration.

Did You Know?

The liver is the only
organ that grows back!
The donated part of the
liver regrows in 4 months.

Learn more at DonateLife.net



Top Frequently Asked Questions

Does registering as a donor change my patient care?

Your life always comes first. It is important to know that the hospital care team does not know the patient's donor status. Doctors work hard to save every patient's life, but sometimes there is a complete and permanent loss of brain function. The patient is declared clinically and legally dead. Only then is donation an option.

Does donation affect funeral plans?

Funeral arrangements of your choice are possible, including a viewing. Through the entire donation process the body is treated with care and respect. Following donation, funeral arrangements can continue as planned.

Does my religion support organ, eye and tissue donation?

All major religions support donation as a final act of compassion and generosity.

Does my social and/or financial status play any part in whether or not I will receive an organ if I ever need one?

No. A national system matches available organs from the donor with people on the waiting list based on blood type, body size, how sick they are, donor distance, tissue type and time on the list. Race, gender, income, celebrity and social status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression does NOT prevent someone from registering as an organ donor.

What can I do to increase organ, eye and tissue donation?

1

Register your
decision to be
a donor at
RegisterMe.org.

2

Tell your family
and friends about
your decision to
Donate Life.

3

Visit DonateLife.net
to discover ways you
can be a champion
of the cause.

4

Ask others to visit
DonateLife.net
to learn more
and register.

Data from Donate Life America EOY 2025 Registry Overview Report, and Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN), as of January 2026.
2024 Eye Banking Statistical Report. Washington, DC: Eye Bank Association of America; 2024. OPTN/SRTR 2025 Annual Data Report.
Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients. Donate LifeSM is a registered service mark of Donate Life America. © 2026 Donate Life America

ORGAN DONATION: MYTHS VS. FACTS

MYTH	FACT
Doctors might try to recover my organs before I'm officially declared dead 	There are two clear, medically and legally recognized pathways for declaring death before donation can proceed: 1. Donation after Brain Death (DBD): Occurs when a patient has an irreversible loss of all brain function. 2. Donation after Circulatory Death (DCD): Occurs when a patient has a fatal injury but is not brain dead. In these cases, the family may choose to remove life support (for example, a ventilator) and allow their loved one to die naturally. Once the heart stops beating, a physician declares death. Organ recovery happens only after death has been officially declared by a physician. The organ recovery team is not involved in this declaration and only enters the operating room after death is pronounced following a waiting period. Strict protocols are followed, and the donation process is halted if the heart were to restart.
Doctors can skip the line to get organs for their patient, even if they're not first in line on the waiting list 	The organ allocation system is a fair, regulated process that uses medical factors like blood type and urgency to match donor organs with recipients. Because a donated organ is only viable for a few hours, other critical factors like a patient's distance from the donor, their biological match, and organ size are also considered. To ensure the organ can be transplanted in time and the lifesaving gift is honored, it may be allocated to a patient who is a better match or closer geographically.
My family will be charged money for the donation	There is no cost to the donor's family or estate for organ, eye or tissue donation. The donor family pays only for medical expenses before death and any costs associated with funeral arrangements.



For more information about organ,
eye and tissue donation visit
DonateLife.net

Donate Life is the national symbol for the cause of donation. Donate Life is a registered service mark of Donate Life America. © 2026 Donate Life America



Careers in Donation & Transplantation

CAREER	DESCRIPTION	EDUCATION
Medical		
Dialysis Technician	Dialysis technicians oversee the safe administration of dialysis to patients with kidney disease. Patients with failing kidneys who are waiting for a transplant must have dialysis to keep their bodies cleansed of impurities that the kidneys would normally help eliminate.	Dialysis certification programs
Dietician and Nutritionist	Dieticians and Nutritionists study how diet affects overall health. They help organ recipients maintain a diet that supports their recovery and health throughout the rest of their lives.	Bachelor's Degree in Health or Nutrition
Immunologist	Immunologists are medical professionals who study the body's immune system and help develop ways for the body to more effectively accept a transplanted organ with fewer side effects.	Doctor of Medicine, with specialty training in Immunology
Medical Lab Technician	Lab technicians, trained in the life sciences, help catalog, store, and test tissues, blood samples, and other important information.	Certification in Laboratory Sciences, Associate's or Bachelor's Degree in Biology or Chemistry
Nephrologist	Nephrologists are medical doctors who specialize in kidney care and treatment.	Medical school, 3-year residency in Internal Medicine
Nurse	Nurses assist physicians in treating transplant recipients and donors and assist in surgery during organ and tissue recovery and transplantation. These nurses typically have critical care experience.	RN, BSN, MSN
Organ Preservationist	Organ Preservationists assist with the surgical recovery of organs, flush organs and place them on "pumps." They label, package, verify the correct organs, and deliver them to transplant centers.	RN, Associate's Degree in Surgical Technology
Pharmacist	Pharmacists work closely with a patient's medical team, the patient and family members to minimize side effects and organ rejection, and maximize quality of life.	Doctoral or professional degree in Pharmacy
Physical Therapist	Physical therapists develop and help administer exercise programs that help organ recipients recover their physical strength and resume their normal activities as much as possible.	Doctorate program in Physical Therapy
Physician	Physicians diagnose and treat diseases that may result in organ failure and provide treatment and prescribe medication for individuals who are waiting for an organ transplant or have undergone organ transplantation	Doctor of Medicine, specialty programs and certification based on the field of study
Procurement Coordinator	Procurement Coordinators are members of Organ Procurement Organizations who are responsible for evaluating potential donors, discussing donation with family members, and managing the donor prior to organ recovery.	RN or other nursing degree
Radiologist	Radiologists understand X-rays and X-ray therapies, and determine the best use of these technologies in the medical care of donors and transplant recipients.	Doctorate program; emphasis on biology, chemistry, and physics
Recovery and Processing Technician	Recovery Technicians perform surgical techniques to recover tissues such as skin, bone and other tissues. Processing technicians then cut, disinfect, and size the tissues for their necessary purposes and package and preserve them for storage and shipment.	Bachelor of Science, on-the-job training

Continued

CAREER	DESCRIPTION	EDUCATION
Transplant Coordinator	Transplant coordinators are members of the transplant center staff responsible for managing the care and progress of potential transplant recipients before, during, and after transplant.	<i>RN or other nursing degree</i>
Transplant Surgeon	Transplant surgeons specialize in the transplantation of particular organs. They also remove organs from donors.	<i>Doctor of Medicine, residency in general surgery, then a fellowship to specialize in the transplant of specified organs.</i>
Science		
Chemist	Chemists are scientists who study chemicals and how they react with one another. Chemists can be involved in developing medications to treat organ recipients.	<i>Bachelor's, Master's, or Ph.D. in Chemistry</i>
Pharmacologist	Pharmacologists are scientists who deal with the preparation, uses, and effects of medications.	<i>Doctor of Medicine or a Ph.D. in Pharmacology</i>
Researcher	Researchers include chemists, biologists, radiologists, and others with training and/or experience in the life sciences. They help develop new drug treatments, methods of transplantation, and ways of treating organ recipients.	<i>Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctorate in specific fields</i>
Social Work and Administration		
Aftercare Coordinator	Aftercare Coordinators manage the confidential communication process between the donor family and the transplant recipient. They also provide grief support and resources.	<i>Bachelor's or Associate Degree in Social Work, Case Work, Counseling or related fields</i>
Donor Family Advocate	Donor Family Advocates support grieving families while advocating for the potential donor and recipients.	<i>Degree in medical, social work, or other related field</i>
Independent	An Independent Living Donor Advocate is a specialized healthcare professional mandated by transplant centers to protect the rights and well-being of living organ donors. Operating independently of the recipient's medical team, they help ensure patients make a fully informed, voluntary decision.	<i>Degree in social work, nursing, psychology, or bioethics,</i>
Social Worker	Social workers work with transplant patients and living donors to provide counseling and education, provide information on services and resources, and perform psychosocial evaluations as needed.	<i>Master of Social Work</i>



Learn more about organ, eye and tissue donation at [DonateLife.net](https://www.DonateLife.net)





What is the National Donate Life Registry?

Donate Life America manages the National Donate Life Registry (NDLR). When you register in the NDLR, you are registering to be an organ, eye and tissue donor for the purpose of saving and healing lives through transplantation – joining the 13.5 million registered donors across the U.S.

Registering at RegisterMe.org ensures your donor registration travels with you, no matter where you live or move across the country. The NDLR was designed to be mobile-friendly and to ensure that potential registrants had an effective and easy way to register their donation decision.

FAQS

Q Can I register in more than one place? For example, if I'm already registered on my license, can I also register through RegisterMe.org?

A Yes! Both your local state donor registry and the National Donate Life Registry are checked by donation professionals at the time of your death. The most recent donor registration is honored as your legal document of gift.

If you registered at your local DMV, your donor registration is in your state donor registry. For most states, they are two separate registries.*

*If you live in AL, KY, or MS, their donor registrations from local driver license partners (DPS, DMV) are uploaded to the National Donate Life Registry.

Q If I don't know my Social Security number, can I still register through RegisterMe.org?

A Absolutely! You can register with your Driver's License ID Number or with your cell phone number.

Q Is my Social Security number safe on RegisterMe.org?

A Your privacy is important. We work to make sure personal data is safe, secure and protected. Donate Life America will only disclose registration information to other entities, such as recovery agencies, solely for the purpose of recognizing and acting on your donation decision at the time of your death.

Q Can I change or update my donor registration after I've already registered?

A You can access your donor record by tapping/clicking on the "Edit Registration" button at RegisterMe.org. You will be asked to enter a few key data fields (e.g., name, address) to log in to your donor record. When in your donor record, you can update your address, update preferences, or remove yourself from the National Donate Life Registry.

Q Can I choose to donate certain organs or tissues when I register?

A Yes. After registering, you can "Edit Registration," and there is an open field where you can list out any donation preferences you may wish to add.

Q Can I register if I'm under 18?

A 15-17-year-olds can register their intent to be organ, eye and tissue donors in the National Donate Life Registry. However, until they are 18 years old, a parent or legal guardian makes the final donation decision.

PROGRAM CALENDAR

This calendar is your roadmap for the year. Each month has a program activity or challenge, and most months also include a one-hour virtual (Zoom) Scholar meeting.

Month	Zoom Meeting Dates	Activity/Challenge
September	<u>Kickoff Meeting (pick one)</u> Tuesday, Sept. 29, 4–5PM Wednesday, Sept. 30, 7–8PM	Welcome & Get Ready — Meet the NEDS team and other Scholars; learn how the program works; and get ready for your first school activity
October	<u>Scholars Meeting (pick one)</u> Tuesday, Oct. 27, 6–7PM Wednesday, Oct. 28, 7–8PM	Get Started + An Easy Win — Introduce the Scholars Program at your school; connect with a teacher, counselor, or administrator who can support you; learn your school's approval process; complete a simple donation awareness activity (pick from the menu)
November	<u>Scholars Meeting (pick one)</u> Tuesday, Nov. 17, 6–7PM Wednesday, Nov. 18, 7–8PM	Bring Donation Education Into the Classroom — Work with a teacher to arrange a NEDS-supported classroom visit; your guest might be a NEDS doctor or other staff member, someone who got a transplant, or donor family member; NEDS will work with you to identify a speaker
December	No Monthly Meeting	No activity required. If you still want to do an activity, pick something from the Scholar Activity Menu or develop an idea of your own that works for your school
January	<u>Scholars Meeting (pick one)</u> Tuesday, Jan. 5, 6–7PM Wednesday, Jan. 6, 7–8PM	Social Media Challenge — Work independently or with others at your school to create social media content that educates others and raises awareness about donation; submit those to NEDS; awards will recognize those voted Most Creative, Most Educational, and Most Impactful
February	<u>Scholars Meeting (pick one)</u> Tuesday, Feb. 23, 6–7PM Wednesday, Feb. 24, 7–8PM	Interview Someone Connected to Donation or Transplantation — Interview a donation or transplant professional or a transplant recipient; choose someone you know or ask NEDS to help connect you with someone
March	<u>Scholars Meeting (pick one)</u> Tuesday, Mar. 23, 6–7PM Wednesday, Mar. 24, 7–8PM	Pick Your Own Activity — Choose an activity from the Activity Menu, develop your own idea, or build on something that worked well earlier in the year
April	<u>Scholars Meeting (pick one)</u> Tuesday, April 27, 6–7PM Wednesday, April 28, 7–8PM	Donate Life Month: Go Bigger! — Plan a more visible activity such as an information table or another school-wide event; share donation information and provide an opportunity for people who choose to do so to register their donation decision
May	<u>Recognition Ceremony</u> Saturday, May 15, 12–1PM	Tell Your Scholar Story — Create a year-end video highlighting your activities and impact, write a reflection essay, or record a short testimonial about what the program experience meant to you; submit your reflection to NEDS

These Are Minimum Requirements

The activities in this calendar are what we ask every Scholar to complete. You are encouraged to do more! If you have another idea, see an opportunity at your school, want to collaborate with other students, or want to repeat an activity that worked well, go for it... as long as your school allows it. You don't need to wait for the next monthly assignment to educate, start conversations, or raise awareness about donation.

How Monthly Meetings Work

The monthly Scholars meeting will be held by Zoom. We offer two different dates and times each month (no meeting in December). The content will be the same at both meetings, so you only need to attend one. Choose the session that works best for your schedule. You'll be sent a Zoom link reminder a few days before the meeting. The actual Zoom link will be the same for all our meetings. These are CAMERA-ON meetings.

These Zoom meetings will not be us simply talking at you! Each session will include some mix of donation or transplant education, a guest speaker, personal stories, tips for upcoming Scholar activities, and hearing what other Scholars are doing in their schools. We'll also talk about the information and resources you need for next month's activity.

Stay Connected. Plan Ahead. Ask for Help.

You don't have to figure everything out on your own. If you need a speaker, materials, help developing an idea, answers to donation questions, or help working through a challenge at your school, reach out to us. We're here to help you succeed.

Closing Recognition Ceremony

We will come together one final time for a 1-hour virtual (Zoom) Closing Recognition Ceremony to celebrate everything our Donate Life Scholars have accomplished during the year. The ceremony will include remarks from NEDS leadership, a look back at the collective impact of the Scholars, and reflections from Scholars about their experiences and what they learned. We will also recognize outstanding activities and contributions, hear from a special guest connected to donation or transplantation, and formally recognize the Scholars for completing the program. Most importantly, this is a chance for all of us to celebrate the difference you have made in your schools and communities, as well as the leadership, knowledge, and skills you have developed along the way.

DONATION AWARENESS

ACTIVITY TOOLKIT

(BY MONTH)

OCTOBER

Your Goal This Month

October is about getting established at your school and taking your first action as a Donate Life Scholar. You don't need to do anything big this month. Start small, learn how things work at your school, and get your first win.

Step 1: Start Following NEDS on Social Media

One of the easiest ways to learn more about donation, and about the work of New England Donor Services, is to follow NEDS on the social media platforms you use. NEDS shares stories about donors and transplant patients, information about organ and tissue donation, behind-the-scenes looks at our work, community events, educational content, Donate Life activities, and much more.

Step 2: Meet Other Donate Life Scholars at Your School

If there's more than one NEDS Donate Life Scholar at your school, connect with each other – everything will be a lot easier if you're working together in one big group or in smaller groups.

Step 3: Connect With Your School Contact

Find a teacher, counselor, school nurse, administrator, club advisor, or other staff member who can serve as your school contact for the year. If there are other Donate Life Scholars at your school, it may be best to do this together. Tell them that you are participating in the NEDS Donate Life Scholars Program and that you will be completing donation education and awareness activities throughout the school year.

You might say something like:

"I was chosen to be part of the NEDS Donate Life Scholars Program this year. I'll be doing some activities at school to help students learn about organ donation and transplantation. I'm hoping you can help me understand how activities like displays, information tables, classroom presentations, or social media posts get approved at our school."

Step 4: Introduce Yourself as a Donate Life Scholar

Find one simple way to let your school community know that you are taking part in the program. This doesn't have to be a separate event; it can be part of your first activity.

One example is to ask for this news to be included in a morning announcement, like:

“Did you know that our school has students participating in the New England Donor Services’ Donate Life Scholars Program this year? We’ll be sharing information and activities throughout the year to help our school community learn more about organ and tissue donation so you can make a more informed choice about donor registration when you get your driver’s license. Watch for more from your Donate Life Scholars!”

Or you can make a small “Meet Your Donate Life Scholars” poster or digital announcement with the names of Scholars at your school, a sentence about the program, and a QR code to the NEDS or Donate Life America website.

Step 5: Choose and Carry Out Your First Activity

Complete one simple donation-awareness activity. Choose something that fits your school and can be done without a lot of planning. Here are some examples, or you can do something different. The key is to get started – don’t make the activity complicated.

A few possible ideas	
Morning Announcement	Share a donation fact or question during school announcements
Meet Your Scholars Display	Introduce your school's Donate Life Scholars and explain what you'll be doing this year
Two-Minute Classroom Introduction	Ask a teacher for two minutes to introduce the program and share one interesting donation fact
Five Conversations Challenge	Have a brief conversation about donation with at least five classmates or friends and note the questions they ask

Step 6: Tell Us What You Did

Use the Activity Report Form link on the website or send a quick email to us with the following information:

- What did you do?
- About how many people did you reach?
- What question did you hear most often?
- Photo, screenshot, announcement, poster, or another example showing what you did

Step 7: Start Planning for November

Before October ends, identify one teacher or class that might be a good fit for November's guest-speaker activity. Think about science, biology, anatomy and physiology, health, psychology, ethics, social studies, or another relevant class.

Ask the teacher whether they might be interested in having a guest from NEDS or someone personally connected to donation or transplantation speak with the class in November. You don't need to find the speaker yourself — NEDS will help with that.

NOVEMBER

Your Goal This Month

This month, your goal is to help bring a real person and a real perspective on donation or transplantation into a classroom at your school. Working with a teacher and NEDS, you will help arrange a guest speaker who can give students an opportunity to learn about donation and transplantation, ask questions, and hear directly from someone connected to this work.

Your speaker might be a NEDS surgeon or other donation professional, a transplant doctor, a transplant patient, or a donor family member. You make the school connection. NEDS will help with the rest.

Step 1: Identify a Teacher and Class

Hopefully you started this process in October, but if not, now is the time to find a teacher who is willing to host a guest speaker. Think about where a donation or transplant discussion might fit. It doesn't have to be a science class. Donation and transplantation involve medicine, science, ethics, communication, psychology, public health, community engagement, and many different careers.

Step 2: Ask the Teacher

Explain that you are a NEDS Donate Life Scholar and that one of your November activities is to bring a guest speaker into a classroom.

You might say something like:

"As part of the NEDS Donate Life Scholars Program, we're bringing donation and transplant education into our schools this month. NEDS can provide a guest speaker such as a donation or transplant professional, transplant recipient, or donor family member. Would you be interested in having someone speak with one of your classes? NEDS will help us arrange the speaker and content."

Let them know that we have different speakers that offer different perspectives.

Possible Speaker	What Students Might Learn
Organ Recovery Surgeon	How organ recovery works, transplantation science, anatomy, teamwork, and careers in medicine
NEDS Donation Professional	How donation happens, the role of an OPO like NEDS, working with hospitals and families, and careers in donation
Transplant Professional	How different organs work, why someone might need a transplant, why there's a waiting list for organs, and careers in transplant
Transplant Recipient	A personal reflection on what it's like to need, wait for, receive, and live with a transplanted heart, kidney, liver, or lungs
Donor Family Member	A family's personal experience with organ donation and what their loved one's donation has meant to them

When you talk to the teacher, find out:

- What dates and class periods might work?
- How much time could the teacher provide (15 minutes, 30 minutes, entire class period)?
- Is it ok for the speaker to attend in person, or does the teacher prefer it by Zoom?
- Is there a particular topic the teacher would like emphasized by the speaker?
- Does the school require approval for an outside guest speaker?

Step 3: Tell NEDS What You Need

Don't worry about finding the speaker yourself. Once your teacher is interested, contact NEDS and we'll work with you to make it happen.

Step 4: Prepare Your Class and Introduce Speaker

Ask your teacher for a minute to introduce the topic and the speaker. This is a chance for you to practice leadership and public speaking. You can introduce yourself, what the NEDS Donate Life Scholars Program is and why you're participating in it, and then introduce the speaker. NEDS will give you a brief bio of the speaker that you can read to the class.

During the class, be a good listener. Help get the Q&A started if the room is quiet by asking one or two questions yourself.

Step 5: Tell Us What You Did

Use the Activity Report Form link on the website or send a quick email to us with the following information:

- What did you do?
- Who spoke and what was their connection to donation/transplantation?
- What class participated?
- About how many students were in the class?
- What question did you hear most often?
- Photo, screenshot, announcement, poster, or another example showing what you did

Your November Mission

Make the connection. Bring a new voice into your school. Create a conversation. This month, you aren't expected to be the expert. Your leadership is creating the opportunity for others to learn directly from someone whose life or work has been touched by donation and transplantation.

DECEMBER

Your Goal This Month

This month, you are not required to do any activity. Enjoy the holidays!

If you want to and you have the time, feel free to choose an activity from the Scholar Activity Menu, use an idea you've seen or heard about, or create something entirely your own. Because December is a busy month, an activity doesn't need to be big or complicated. Choose something you can realistically plan and get done before the school break.

Step 1: Choose Your Audience

Who would you like to reach this month? It could be:

- Your entire school through announcements, newsletters, displays, or social media.
- A smaller group like a club, team, class, student organization, or lunch period.
- Your friends and peers through conversations, a quiz, poll, or interactive activity.

Knowing who you want to reach will make it easier to choose the right activity.

Step 2: Choose Your Activity

Use the Scholar Activity Menu in this handbook for ideas. Here are some possibilities that could work for a December activity:

ACTIVITY IDEA	WHAT IT COULD LOOK LIKE
Myth vs. Fact	Create a display, announcement series, quiz, or social post addressing common donation myths
Donation Question of the Week	Ask a question, let students guess, and later share the answer and explanation
What Can Be Donated?	Create an educational display showing the organs and tissues that can be donated
Donation Question Box	Invite students to anonymously submit questions about donation and work with NEDS to answer them
QR Code Challenge	Create a poster or display directing students to a donation quiz or approved educational resource
Lunch & Learn	Set up a small information table or informal activity during lunch
Classroom Mini-Presentation	Ask a teacher for 5–10 minutes to share something you've learned as a Scholar
Writing	Write a short donation education piece for a student or parent newsletter or a class
Talk to Family & Friends	Talk to your family and friends about what you're learning about organ and tissue donation and transplantation
Create Your Own	Develop another idea that fits your interests and your school

Step 5: Tell Us What You Did

If you choose to do something, use the Activity Report Form link on the website or send a quick email to us with the following information:

- What did you do?
- About how many people did you reach?
- What question did you hear most often?
- Photo, screenshot, announcement, poster, or another example showing what you did

If your activity produced something—such as a poster, announcement, newsletter article, quiz, photograph, or other creative work—send us a copy if your school permits it. We would love to see what you created.

Your school. Your audience. Your idea.

There is no single “right” December activity. Choose something that interests you and makes sense for your school community.

JANUARY

Your Goal This Month

This month, your challenge is to create an original piece of social media content to reach people your age. It should teach something about organ donation, address an important question or myth, tell a compelling story, or find a creative way to get people thinking and talking about donation. At the end of this challenge, NEDS will recognize entries in three categories:

Step 1: Decide Whether to Work Alone or as a Team

You can create something on your own, work with the other Donate Life Scholars at your school, or invite friends to help. If you work as a team, decide early who will handle different parts of the project – for example, the idea, the script, who will be on camera, filming, editing, creating graphics, or checking facts.

Step 2: Choose One Main Message

What is the ONE thing you want someone to remember after seeing your content? One memorable idea communicated well is better than 10 facts squeezed into one post. Here are some ideas, but you can choose something else if you want:

- A common donation myth – and the fact behind it
- What organs and tissues can be donated
- How donation and transplantation work
- Why donor registration matters
- How many people are waiting for a transplant
- The impact one donor can have
- A surprising donation fact
- Frequently asked questions about donation
- Donation and transplantation careers
- Why talking with your family about donation matters
- How people can register as organ donors
- Something you've learned as a Donate Life Scholar that surprised you

Step 3: Choose Your Format

FORMAT	EXAMPLES
Short Video/Reel	Myth vs. fact, quick explainer, “Did you know?”, student-to-student message
Interview	Ask classmates what they know and follow with accurate information
Graphic/Infographic	Turn an important donation fact into an eye-catching visual
Carousel	Use several slides to explain a topic or answer a question
Quiz/Poll	Ask followers to guess before revealing and explaining the answer
Story	Create a sequence of interactive questions, facts, or conversation prompts
Photo + Caption	Pair a strong visual with a short educational message
Something Else	Have a different idea? Be creative!

Step 4: Make Sure Its Accurate

Creativity never comes before accuracy. Use your Donation 101 materials and NEDS-approved resources to check every donation fact, statistic, or claim in your content. If you're unsure about something, ask NEDS before you post or submit it.

Step 5: Include a Call to Action

Good social media content gives people something to do next. We think it’s best to ask them to visit a trusted source for more information, like Donate Life America.

Considering letting people know that they don't have to wait until they get a permit or driver's license to register as a donor. Anyone can register through the National Donate Life Registry at [RegisterMe.org](https://www.registerme.org).

Step 6: Protect People’s Privacy

Before including anyone else in your content, make sure you have the appropriate permission. Follow your school's rules about photos and videos of students, filming on school property, school names and logos, posting to school-affiliated accounts, and tagging or identifying other people. Never share someone's personal donation, transplant, or medical story without their permission. When in doubt, ask your school contact or NEDS before posting.

Step 7: Create and Submit Your Content

Create your final piece and submit it to NEDS. When you send it to us, let us know your name, the format or platform it was designed for, and whether it was posted.

Public posting is not required. Still submit the finished content directly to NEDS. Entries will be eligible for awards either way.

If you decide to post your content, keep track of whatever information is available, such as views, likes, shares, and comments... and let us know how it goes!

NEDS will review all the entries you send to us, and a NEDS committee will select award winners for the following categories:

MOST CREATIVE	Recognizes an original, engaging, or unexpected approach to communicating about donation.
MOST EDUCATIONAL	Recognizes content that makes donation or transplantation especially clear, understandable, and informative.
MOST IMPACTFUL	Recognizes content that demonstrates strong audience engagement, starts meaningful conversations, reaches people effectively, or has another identifiable effect on its audience.

FEBRUARY/MARCH

Your Goal This Month

This month, you will interview someone. You have two options.

Option 1 is to interview someone whose life or work is connected to organ donation or transplantation. Your guest might be a donation professional, transplant professional, transplant recipient, living donor, or another person with relevant experience. If you want to team up with one or two other Scholars to do this interview together, that's totally fine.

The interview can be with someone you already know, or NEDS can help connect you with someone. Interviews will generally take place by Zoom, making it possible to speak with people throughout New England.

Option 2 is to interview an adult you know – this could be a family member, a teacher, a neighbor, etc. If you choose this option, you will interview the person about their understanding and attitudes about organ and tissue donation, and their reasons for being a registered donor or why they chose not to register.

Step 1: Decide Whom You'd Like to Interview

Think about whose perspective you would most like to understand. Possible interview guests include:

INTERVIEW GUEST	WHAT YOU MIGHT EXPLORE
Donation Professional	How donation happens, working with donor families and hospitals, careers in donation, challenges and rewards of the work
Technology Professional	What are the machines that are used to keep organs functioning before they are transplanted, and how do they work
Transplant Physician or Surgeon	Caring for transplant patients, transplantation medicine, surgery, careers, and advances in the field
Transplant Nurse/Coordinator or Other Professional	Patient care, preparing people for transplant, teamwork, careers, and what happens behind the scenes
NEDS Recovery Surgeon or Other NEDS Professional	Organ recovery, donation science, logistics, teamwork, and careers
Transplant Recipient	Waiting for a transplant, receiving the call, recovery, life after transplant, and what donation means personally
Living Donor	Deciding to donate, evaluation, surgery, recovery, and reflections on the experience
Family Member, Teacher, Other Adult	Attitudes and understanding about organ and tissue donation

Step 2: Tell NEDS What Interests You

If you need help finding a guest, tell us what type of person you would most like to interview and why. We might not always be able to match your first choice, but we'll do our best to connect you with someone whose experience matches your interests. We'll give you information about your guest, so you know a little about them before you meet them.

Step 3: Prepare Your Questions

The interview doesn't have to be that long – maybe around 20 to 30 minutes. So, we'll help you plan to have about 8 to 10 questions to ask. We have lists of questions we'll give you, depending on who the guest is.

You probably won't ask all your questions, and that's okay. Good conversations often go in directions you didn't anticipate. Choose questions that invite your guest to explain, reflect, or tell a story rather than questions that can be answered with yes or no.

Step 4: Do the Interview

Plan for about 20 to 30 minutes. First, introduce yourself and explain that you're part of the NEDS Donate Life Scholars Program. Then begin your questions, but don't feel tied to your list. Then thank your guest for sharing their time and experience with you.

Step 5: Tell Us About Your Experience

Use the Activity Report Form link on the website or send a quick email to us with the following information:

- Your name
- Who you interviewed and their connection to donation or transplantation, if any?
- What was the most interesting thing you learned?

APRIL

Your Goal This Month

April is National Donate Life Month, making it a perfect time to bring everything you've learned as a Donate Life Scholar together. Your challenge is to plan and carry out a visible donation education activity or event at your school. Whenever possible, your activity should reach a broader audience than your previous activities and give students an opportunity to learn, ask questions, have conversations, and, if they choose, register as an organ and tissue donor.

Step 1: Choose Your Donate Life Month Activity

Here are some possible ideas:

ACTIVITY	WHAT IT COULD LOOK LIKE
Donate Life Information Table	Set up during lunch with facts, quizzes, giveaways, QR codes, and opportunities to ask questions.
Donate Life Day at School	Choose a day for announcements, displays, activities, and Donate Life colors.
Interactive Trivia Challenge	Students answer donation questions and learn the answers as they participate.
Myth vs. Fact Station	Let students vote before revealing and discussing accurate information.
What Can Be Donated? Challenge	Create an interactive matching or guessing activity about organs and tissues.
Donation Question Wall	Invite students to post questions and provide NEDS-approved answers throughout the month.
Classroom Campaign	Bring a short activity into several classes instead of just one.
Club/Team Partnership	Work with student government, a health club, sports team, service organization, or another group.
School-Wide Media Campaign	Combine announcements, posters, social media, newsletters, videos, or other school media.
Guest + Activity	Pair a speaker or personal story with an interactive student activity.
Create Your Own Event	Develop something unique to your school.

Step 2: Build a Team

April is a great month to bring other people into the project. Work with other Donate Life Scholars at your school. Consider inviting friends, student clubs, teachers, counselors, nurses, coaches, student government, or other school organizations to participate.

Step 3: Plan Early and Get Approval

A larger activity usually needs more planning. Talk with your school contact early. Determine where and when the activity can happen, what permissions are required, whether tables or displays are available, what school communication channels you can use, and whether there are rules about QR codes, photographs, giveaways, or outside organizations.

Then tell NEDS what you're planning. We can help with materials, supplies, graphics, QR codes, activity ideas, and other resources.

Step 4: Do It!

Carry out your planned activity and have fun with it. Be ready for questions. And capture the moment. If allowed by your school, take pictures of your table, display, materials, or activity. These can help NEDS celebrate the work of the Scholars. Follow all school requirements before photographing students or sharing images.

Step 5: Provide an Opportunity to Register

April is a good time to make donor registration available but clearly optional. Students who want to record their decision can be directed to the National Donate Life Registry at RegisterMe.org. Students may also register when eligible through their state's motor vehicle process.

Step 6: Tell Us What Happened

Use the Activity Report Form link on the website or send a quick email to us with the following information:

- What did you do for Donate Life Month?
- About how many people did you reach?
- What question did you hear most often?
- Photo, screenshot, announcement, poster, or another example showing what you did

If you can, send NEDS photos, screenshots, announcements, posters, or other examples from your activity.

MAY

Your Goal This Month

You made it! Over the past school year, you've learned about organ and tissue donation and transplantation, brought that knowledge into your school, talked with your peers, worked with teachers and other students, heard from people whose lives and careers have been touched by donation, and developed your own skills.

For your final Scholar activity, we want you to look back on the experience and tell us what it meant to you.

There is no event to organize. Instead, choose one of three ways to reflect on and share your Donate Life Scholar story with NEDS.

Step 1: Choose How You Want to Tell Your Story

Option 1: Create a Short Video	Create a 2-to-3-minute video about your Donate Life Scholar experience. You can simply speak to the camera, or make the video more creative by including photographs, screenshots, examples of your activities, or other materials from the year. You might talk about why you became a Scholar, what you did, what you learned, a memorable moment, something that surprised you, what you're most proud of, or what the experience meant to you. Don't worry about making a professionally produced video. We're interested in your story, not your editing skills.
Option 2: Write a Reflection	Write a brief reflection of approximately 500 words about your Scholar experience. This does not need to sound like a school essay. We want to hear your voice and your perspective.
Option 3: Create a Short Scholar Testimonial	Video record a short testimonial of you answering the question: <i>"What did being a NEDS Donate Life Scholar mean to me?"</i> You might describe something you learned, an experience that stayed with you, how you grew, or why you think other high school students should consider becoming Scholars. These testimonials may help us explain the program to future Scholars, schools, families, and the NEDS community.

Your reflection doesn't need to say that everything was perfect. If something was hard, uncomfortable, or didn't work as planned, you can talk about that too.

Step 2: Submit Your Scholar Story

Send NEDS your Scholar story. This will be the final thing you send to us.

NEDS may want to highlight Scholar experiences when telling others about the program. Submitting your reflection as a program requirement does not automatically mean NEDS can use your name, image, video, or words. If NEDS wants to feature your work in some way, we will ask for your permission before doing so.

Step 3: Join Us for the Closing Recognition Ceremony (by Zoom)

Our final meeting will be the NEDS Donate Life Scholars Closing Recognition Ceremony on Saturday, May 15, from 12:00–1:00 PM.

We'll look back at what Scholars accomplished across New England, hear reflections from students, recognize outstanding activities and contributions, hear from a special guest connected to donation or transplantation, and formally recognize Scholars for completing the program.

Step 4: Check the Mail!

Keep an eye on your mailbox. NEDS will send you your Donate Life Scholar certificate and scholarship money (if you met the program requirements) to recognize your participation and accomplishments.