

WVU Medicine Berkeley and Jefferson Medical Centers recognize Organ Donation Month

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Jonie Stenack helps Berkeley Medical Center security raise the flag honoring organ donors.

AINSLEY HALL/ Journal photo

MARTINSBURG — WVU Medicine Berkeley and Jefferson Medical Centers honored Organ Donation Month with a flag raising ceremony on April 8, honoring donors who help save lives. Throughout April, staff will be finding ways to inform people and encourage them to register to become donors.

Berkeley Medical Center Director of Nursing Jonie Stenack and Director of Hospital Development and Family Support Jamie Smith headed up the event. Stenack said that ever since she started working at WVU Medicine they've celebrated Organ Donation Month by raising awareness and teaching people what it means to be a donor. Many people have to wait for organs, with the liver and kidneys being the most needed. Stenack said that it's a gift people can give after their life to help someone else.

"A majority of people support organ, eye and tissue donation, however 60% or less are actually registered donors," Stenack said. "This gives us the opportunity to get information out to the public so that they can be informed to make the decision to become a registered donor and they have the resources to complete that registration."

Sometimes people choose not to become donors for religious reasons, but others believe their age prevents them from being donors. Stenack said that sometimes people think that when they are registered as a donor, their medical treatments are altered, while others might think they are too sick to donate, but that isn't always the case. If someone has questions, they can always talk with their doctor or medical professional to see if they can help.

"The biggest thing that we focus on this month is getting the information out," Stenack said. "A lot of times we'll hear that patients may have had conversations with families, but there isn't anything designated. And so I think the biggest thing is making sure that they're informed to make the decision, and if they have had those conversations or those thoughts, that they're sharing those with their family their loved ones who may be making decisions for them at some point in time, and then they're enacting on it and registering. Because that's not a decision that someone else has to make for them."

Stenack said that one person can impact eight or nine people through organ donation, or up to 150 people by tissue donation. Hospital staff will also be celebrating National Blue and Green Day on April 10 by wearing t-shirts and reminding everyone of the importance of donating and how it can save someone's life. If people are interested in becoming a registered donor, they can do so when they renew their driver's license through the West Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) or they can sign up at <https://donatelife.net/>.

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