

Rodeo announcer donates platelets in honor of wife

Longtime rodeo announcer, rancher, and team roping heeler Kevin "Kedo" Olson, who has a ranch in the Culver/Terrebonne area, knows all too well the importance of blood donations.

His wife of 45 years, Marilee, was diagnosed in December 2015 with stage-two ovarian cancer, which was removed and treated with chemotherapy. In October 2016, cancer reappeared in her intestines, requiring more chemo. That was the 2016-17 winter of the big snow. It took Olson seven hours to clear the ranch driveway so he could get Marilee to her chemo treatments. During that time, she required multiple blood transfusions, and it was always available. The Red Cross made sure it got to Redmond, icy roads or not.

Marilee lost her battle with cancer in January 2017. As a way of honoring her memory and giving back the gift of life, after seeing how his wife needed the help of platelets during her chemo treatments, Olson has donated platelets every two weeks since her passing and also whole blood on occasion. He said that platelet donation takes about two-plus hours, much longer than whole blood donation. Now that he's retired from rodeo announcing and his son-in-law runs the ranch, he has the time to give.

Olson's example has inspired others to get involved. His church family in Powell Butte, Shiloh Ranch Church, holds blood drives. Last May, his daughter's school did a blood drive in memory of her mother and plans to again this year. Scott Johnson, of *Central Oregon Rancher* magazine contacted Olson about doing a cover story on the blood drive next May, which would have been the Olsons' 48th wedding anniversary.

In November 2018, the American Red Cross honored Olson for his efforts by inducting him into the Donation Hall of Fame, which recognizes people all over the country who have shown extraordinary commitment to giving blood.



deceased donation only. If you are interested in being a living donor, it's important to educate yourself about the donation process, required testing, financial considerations, risks and recovery. Kidneys are the most common organs donated by living donors,

and most transplant centers in Oregon and southwest Washington focus on this type of living transplant. Contact a local transplant center to learn more.

The three regional organ transplant centers in Oregon include Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital, Oregon

Health and Sciences University, and the VA Portland Health Care System, all in Portland. Currently, other living donor procedures are not performed in Oregon or SW Washington. Bone marrow donations are handled through the National Marrow Donor Program, which can be found online.

There are no age limitations on who can donate. Both newborns and senior citizens have been donors. The circumstances of death and medical condition at the time of death determine what organs, eyes and tissue can be donated.

There are three ways to register as a donor. The Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles has a box on the application form for a learner's permit, license, or state ID. When checked, legal consent is given for organ, eye and/or tissue donation upon death. A small heart will appear on the license. Registration can also be done online at www.donatelifenw.org, or with a paper form.

Joining the Oregon Donor Registry via the Oregon DMV has proved phenomenally successful, ensuring that nearly 75 percent of Oregon drivers have registered their decision to donate.

It is critical that registered donors tell their family or healthcare power of attorney about their wish to be a donor, regardless of how they register. Talking with

them about donation ensures they can advocate for the donor's final wishes.

The Donate Life Northwest website provides answers to potential donors' questions and fully explains the different options available.



HOW TO GIVE BLOOD

- Those who are over age 16, weigh at least 110 pounds, and are in generally good health may be eligible to donate blood.
- Make an appointment online at www.RedCrossBlood.org, or call 1-800-REDCROSS (733-2767)

HOW TO BECOME AN ORGAN, EYE, AND TISSUE DONOR

- Join the Oregon Donor Registry online at www.donatelifenw.org or via the Oregon DMV
- Tell your family or healthcare power of attorney your wish to be a donor so they can advocate for your final wishes



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