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Photo/video opportunities and interviews will be available with donor family members and tissue recipients.

Area Event on Sunday, March 22 **Honors Organ and Tissue Donors and Their Families**

Thousands of people have been touched by the generosity of Floridians and their families who chose to give the "gift of life" through tissue donation. On Sunday, March 22, Southeast Tissue Alliance (SETA) and the Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research Inc. will honor those individuals at their annual *Remembrance & Recognition* ceremony at 1:00 p.m. at the Wilson Center for the Arts on the FCCJ Beach Boulevard campus. Over 100 family and friends of tissue donors will pay tribute to their loved ones and their life-changing contribution. Speaking will be David Caples, donor father and founder of the Katie Caples Foundation whose goal is educating high school youths about donation. "Education is a vital component to solving the shortage of available organs and tissues for transplantation. We will reach 10,000 high school students this year through a unique program aimed at educating the students and their families about organ, tissue and eye donation." Also telling his story will be Pastor Michael Riley of Deermeadows Baptist Church, a double cornea recipient and heart valve. His left cornea was from a 12 year old boy and he says there isn't a day that goes by that he doesn't think of his donor. With National Donate Life month beginning in less than two weeks, SETA wants to continue educating the community about organ, tissue and eye donation and the tremendous gift of life given by these families.

"Remembrance & Recognition" is an on-going program of SETA to show appreciation to the families of tissue donors. Families are the critical link to donation, since a person cannot become a donor unless the donor program is informed of the death and if the next of kin agrees to the donor's wishes. In Florida, as in most states, the family is ultimately responsible for deciding whether their loved one will be a donor. This donor recognition event thanks families who are vital in carrying out their loved ones' wishes and provides donor families with an opportunity to share memories of their loved ones.



Tissue donation has far-reaching benefits for transplant recipients. One donor can provide tissue to improve the lives of up to 60 patients. People can receive tissue through many different types of surgery: spine or dental repair, limb replacement or repair, heart valve transplants and skin grafts to heal burns or in elective reconstructive surgery. Tissue may also be used to repair deformities of the face and body and to repair certain body structures to enable normal function.

The Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research is a nonprofit charitable organization dedicated to the recovery, evaluation and distribution of eye tissue for transplantation, research, and education. The institute covers 50 counties in central and north Florida. Since its inception in 1973, the institute has provided thousands of corneas for transplant and eye tissue for research.

SETA is celebrating 26 years and is one of the largest single tissue recovery programs in the nation. It is honored to have provided donation services to over 20,000 families. SETA remains a not-for-profit organization committed to recovering and providing tissues for transplant and research, and to educating the public and medical professionals on the importance and benefits of tissue donation.

To learn more about tissue donation visit www.donorcare.org.

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