

Leaving a Gift of Learning

BY TODD DEVLIN (MA'09)

Donating one's body to science has been referred to as a final contribution to society.

"There is a great amount of altruism," says Haley Linklater, lab supervisor in the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, who is responsible for handling the donations to the Body Bequeathal Program at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry.

Many people choose body bequeathal as a way of giving back to humanity and to increase the quality of health for future generations.

"By donating their bodies and training future health care professionals, they are educating a new group of students – a generation that may find cures to diseases," Linklater says.

Whatever the reason, body bequeathal is an act that benefits a large number of students at The University of Western Ontario, including those in medicine, dentistry, physical therapy, occupational therapy and kinesiology, who are provided the opportunity to learn anatomy through the best

possible teaching tool – the human cadaver. As a result, students gain a unique understanding of the human body and its form and function.

As a way to express their gratitude, students are invited to speak at an annual memorial service held for donor families and friends. At one service, Jacqui Piggott, a member of Schulich Medicine Class of 2011, delivered this message:

"My donor has taught me about anatomy more eloquently than any lecture or text ever could. I have confidence now in my knowledge of the human body, and this I owe to my donor. As I move forward in my career in medicine I will never forget his sacrifice."

Dr. Peter Haase, Director of Clinical Anatomy at Schulich, is also vocal in his appreciation of donors, and he makes sure to express this to families at the service.

"Donors do so much for us, so whatever their roles and occupations in life, you can now add to that list teacher and mentor," Haase explains.

Many families also find the memorial service to be helpful in the grieving process. That was certainly the case for Stewart Nutt, whose mother, Margaret, was honoured at a service last spring.

"It allowed our family to share this experience with many others," says Nutt, whose mother and father both decided several years ago to donate their bodies to science.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE BODY BEQUEATHAL PROGRAM, VISIT www.uwo.ca/anatomy/res_serv/bequeathal.html

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“They felt a responsibility to help others in any way possible when they lived, and they felt the Body Bequeathal Program at Schulich and Western would in some small way allow their body to be used to benefit others after their death,” he explains.

Nutt has since decided to follow in his parents’ footsteps.

“Students at the service talked about learning so much from their ‘teachers’ – the bodies used in their program,” he says. “I have been a teacher for many years, and I felt this one last lesson could benefit a student or students in some lasting way. What better legacy could I leave?”

