

Paying it forward

THE ACT OF PAYING IT FORWARD IS A MORAL PHILOSOPHY THAT DATES BACK TO ANCIENT TIMES. WHILE MODERNIZED IN FILM AND LITERATURE, THE PREMISE IS THE SAME. IT IS DESCRIBED AS AN OBLIGATION TO DO THREE GOOD DEEDS FOR OTHERS IN RESPONSE TO A SINGLE GOOD DEED RECEIVED.



Paying it forward should accomplish things that the other person cannot accomplish on their own. From this, the practice of helping one another can spread exponentially throughout society, at a ratio of three to one, creating a social movement with an impact of making the world a better place.

The New England Organ Bank regularly facilitates the ultimate “pay it forward,” using one lost life to save or improve another.

Organ and tissue donations are gifted through living wills, driver’s license directives, and families of deceased loved ones. According to organdonor.gov,

“Last year alone, organ donors made more than 28,000 transplants possible. Another one million people received cornea and other tissue transplants to help them recover from trauma, bone damage, spinal injuries, burns, hearing impairment and vision loss.”

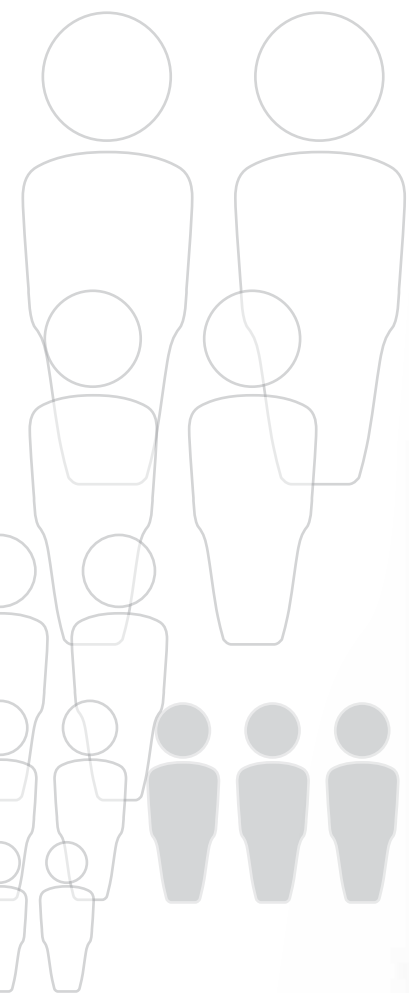
Since 2012, Kristina Andrzejewski has been director of tissue recovery at the New England Organ Bank—the oldest independent organ procurement organization (OPO) in the country. The facility’s mission is to save and enhance lives through organ and tissue donation. Kristina specializes in donor tissues such as skin, heart valves, corneas and tendons—which are used to save lives, restore eyesight, and repair injuries in ACL tears.

All organ and tissue donations begin with a weight. Once consent for donation has been obtained through either the donor’s DMV records or from next of kin, the donor’s weight must be recorded. This is one of the first qualifiers to move on to the next stage: recovery. Once a confirmed weight passes as acceptable, tissue samples undergo rigorous testing. Serology tests are run on the donor to ensure the samples are safe and disease-free. Cultures are also taken on every tissue recovered.

Prior to 2009, an accurate means of measuring weight was missing, potentially skewing acceptable donations from

Continued on page 26

The New England Organ Bank is now able to accurately measure exact donor weight, maximizing donation opportunities by eliminating estimations.



Kristina Andrzejewski, director of tissue recovery at the New England Organ Bank, needed a custom floor scale to weigh donors.



Paying It Forward continued from page 25

moving forward to the recovery phase. Donor weight was estimated based on medical records and the family's best estimate— which was not always accurate. New England Organ Bank rightly errs on the side of caution whenever something is in question, and estimating weight meant perfectly safe tissue could be deemed unsafe for transplants. If a donor's weight was on the border of acceptance, it would not advance to the recovery phase. A more precise means of recording donor weight was needed to ensure no acceptable tissue would be lost. The organ bank needed a custom floor scale exhibiting accurate weighments

and durability, while adhering to strict sanitary standards.

In addition to accuracy, the organ bank also required a scale in the recovery area that could withstand equally important washdown requirements. Avoiding contamination is essential in the transplant process—a factor which requires special scale considerations. With the installation of the custom washdown-ready Rice Lake floor scale, the donor's weight is now precisely recorded and converted into kilograms, which is the industry standard unit of measure. This weight is used to calculate the total amount of blood and plasma a donor can receive without compromising the tissue sample;

too much fluid given results in dilution, making it unfit for transplantation.

“The scale *needs* to provide an accurate weight of the donor,” Kristina explains. “This is very important because if the scale is off, or the weight is estimated, the calculation for fluid levels won't be accurate. We are very happy with Rice Lake's floor scale which gives us readings down to a tenth of a gram.”

Since donors are weighed on one of the organ bank's two stretchers, the ability to store tare weights is also important. “We love that whether we are using the 130-pound stretcher or the 200-pound stretcher,” Kristina continues, “we can simply select the appropriate tare weight that's already stored in the system and get a weight of only the donor.”

The New England Organ Bank has implemented a custom Rice Lake scale for their unique application. Alliance Scale Inc., in Canton, MA, provides service for this unique scale.

The washdown-capable floor scale provides tenth-of-a-gram precision.



“The scale *needs* to provide an accurate weight of the donor. We are very happy with Rice Lake's floor scale which gives us readings down to a tenth of a gram.”

Kristina Andrzejewski

The organ bank is now able to accurately measure exact donor weight, maximizing donation opportunities by eliminating estimations. The scale's precision allows for more material to be identified and recovered for transplant, resulting in “pay it forward” at the organ bank. Rice Lake is honored to be but a small part in helping the New England Organ Bank give the ‘gift of life.’ ■