



the HARVESTER OF HOPE

Diane Craig, Image International

Diane Craig took it as a sign when she received word the United States Department of Health had approved \$172,000 in funding for her latest idea. She got the news on September 30, 2002. Her daughter's birthday. "I think it means something," says Craig, sitting behind her desk at Image International, the company she owns, a photo of her daughter Sandrine on a computer screen beside her. "Sandrine would have been very happy we were able to take this next step."

Sandrine Craig, eleven, was in a fatal school-bus accident on May 25, 1999, and died in hospital three days later. Craig donated her daughter's organs and then created Sandrine's Gift of Life, a

charity designed to raise awareness of organ donors. Since then, she has become a member of the Canadian Council for Organ Transplantation and has dropped the puck at the Senators hockey game, Don Cherry by her side, after making an impassioned speech on national television for more organ donors. She has spoken of her daughter, and the priceless gift she gave at schools and international symposia, in newspaper essays, and at numerous business luncheons.

Through Craig's efforts, Sandrine's Gift of Life has already saved the lives of countless people around the world. Yet the announcement from the U.S Department of Health

Health put the charity in another dimension. Quite literally. "It is a great idea, using the power of the internet to spread a positive message about organ-donor transplantation," says Pierre Killeen, a spokesman for ePals, an Ottawa based company that is also the world's largest on-line educational service provider. "We have been working with Diane on the project for some time, and it is really starting to take off."

What the U.S health department funded (the Children's Wish Foundation of Canada also chipped in \$25,000) is the latest educational initiative by ePals - a comprehensive web site on the human body and the need for organ donors. (It can be accessed by going to www.epals.com.) Using the same as the charity - Sandrine's Gift of Life - the web site allows classrooms around the world to register for a four stage school project. In the first stage, the students learn about the human body and the functions of the various organs. In the second stage, a classroom is paired with another classroom for an on-line research project. In the third stage, a child who has received an organ transplantation comes into the classroom for a question-and-answer session. In the fourth and final stage, each student tries to get people to sign organ-donor cards. If they are successful in getting five people to sign, they become member's of Sandrine's Brigade and receive membership cards from ePals.

So far, more than 100 classrooms across North America have signed up for the new service. "It is a great way to get children talking to their parents and families about organ donations," says Killeen. "It is a way of using the internet for social marketing for making a difference in the world."

As for Craig, she sees the latest flowering of Sandrine's Gift of Life as a logical step in what will be a lifelong mission. On the

day Sandrine died, her organs were used to change the lives of six people: three adults and three children. Her heart saved the life of a thirty-four year old woman who had been disabled from birth. Her liver saved the life of an eight month-old baby. Her eyes went to two women, her kidneys to two teenagers.

Some of those people have sent Craig cards. A hand drawn angel came from one of the teenagers, a beautiful drawing that you have to look at closely to see that every line is actually a phrases-thank you -- written repeatedly.

Craig learned of the past life of the woman who received Sandrine's heart, so sickly as a child that she could not even skip rope or dare to take a vacation. Last year the woman fulfilled a childhood dream and went to Disneyland. From those initial six people, Sandrine's Gift of Life has gone on to change the lives of countless others. Craig gets cards and notes from some of those people as well. Like the angel, the notes say pretty much the same thing: thank you, over and over again.

"I had a vision making a difference," says Craig. "This program does that."

--Ron Corbett

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