

Kimberly Velk
Donor Reflection
Physician Assistant Program

Dear Donor,

I have been looking forward to the day you and I would meet for many years. The first time I learned about someone as kind and generous as you was when I was in high school. I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to tour the donor lab as part of a "future in medicine" day the University of South Dakota was hosting. I could not imagine myself learning the human body in any other way. Although I had aspirations of learning anatomy by way of a donor such as you, my path did not lead directly here. The first anatomy class I took was in undergraduate. This class utilized plastic and animal models in place of learning from a real human body. We often had to infer what the muscle, bone, or movement would equate to in a human. Although I learned many great facts about the human body from this course, there was always a disconnect that left me wondering. I often pondered how a real human body differed from the models I studied so diligently. Would your bones move in the same static way the bones in my model did? Perhaps your bones would move with more precision and grace as they had physically experienced the movements I tried to elicit from the model.

The first time I was introduced to you, I was left speechless. It was hard to imagine how someone could be so generous as to donate their body so I, alongside my classmates, could learn. Through your generosity, I have learned how your body communicates with its most distant parts so to feel the warmth of the sand beneath your toes. You have taught me how resilient one's body can be by its recovery and refusal to give up when one path fails. Your body has taught me how with a little

Kimberly Velk
Donor Reflection
Physician Assistant Program

extra effort one can reach the same destination. Whether referencing the course one's life takes them on or collateral branches of a blood vessel, sometimes a little extra effort is all it takes.

Each day I feel I learn more about you which makes me often wonder what you were like when you were alive. What hopes and dreams did you have? Did you work in an office, a school, or perhaps outside? As I dive deeper into the sea of knowledge you continue to unveil to me, I wonder what other wisdom you have to share. Based on the time we have spent together thus far, I know you had a wealth of life lessons and experience.

Although our time together is drawing near the end, I want you to know I will never forget you. You have provided me with a gift I can never repay to you directly; however, by allowing me to learn from you, dear donor, you have made me into a better practitioner. Through your generosity, I have gained more insight and understanding than I could have ever imagined all those many years ago while touring the donor lab. You have not been just my donor, but my mentor. Thank you, dear donor, for all that you have taught me.

To the family of my donor, I would like to thank you as well. You have shared your daughter, mother, sister, aunt, and friend with me so I too could learn of her beauty. The lessons I have learned from your loved one will be carried with me for the rest of my life. Thank you for your wiliness to allow me to learn from such a caring individual.