

Hello, my name is Nicole Rogers. I am a second year medical student. I had the opportunity to learn in the anatomy lab last year. This is the letter I wrote during that time to my donor and my donor's loved ones.

To start, to my donor:

You are irreplaceable. You are irreplaceable in this world, and no one could teach me what you have. I remember looking forward to meeting you. I was told time and time again that you were to be my first patient. But I do not believe that you are my patient. To say that you are my patient would assume that I have something to offer you, to help heal or offer emotional support, to critically think about conditions in order to stabilize you back to a normal baseline. You do not need me like a patient needs a physician. There is nothing I can offer you that you need, except perhaps one thing. Perhaps you need me like a teacher needs the students. What is the one desire that a teacher wants for his or her students? To learn. You are my most powerful teacher. You have given everything of yourself so that, by learning from you, future lives will not be ended too soon. As your student, I hope I have lived up to your expectations to learn, not just for a good grade, but for the opportunity to someday better another's life through what you have taught me.

In the short time I have known you, you have taught me more than just the medical necessity of learning anatomy. Even when you have left your loved ones, you are still bringing people together. The memorial service is just one example of how your life is bringing your loved ones and me together, people I never would have had the opportunity to meet without you. Every encounter I have with you, you bring together the members of my anatomy group. You are a true teacher who encourages students to collaborate together, to bring our individual passions and gifts to the team as a whole, so we all can best learn and apply the material. I cannot learn by myself. I have always needed my lab group to help me understand all that you have to teach me. I have seen my group support each other in learning, as well encourage one another in pursuing passions outside of learning anatomy. You allowed our companionship to grow beyond the confines of a classroom. I will remember that as I encounter each patient, whose illness is still felt beyond the walls of a doctor's office.

As a medical student, I crave knowing the science, the depth of understanding, and the "why" of what happens in the human body. As much as I love that, you have taught me that there is more to medicine than just the science. There is a human aspect that cannot be replaced. Just as you have offered yourself to me, I must also give of myself to my patients: to listen, to teach, to be patient and kind, and to do my best to do what I can to make their life better after leaving the office.

Next, to my donor's loved ones:

Thank you. Thank you for the gift of love you have shared with your loved ones. Thank you for letting me see the living love of your family member alive in each of you, in how you live your life and what you do to make this world a better place. Thank you especially for your support of your family member's decision to give the gift of learning that will never die. Thank you for letting them give all of us the opportunity to save lives from their gift after their passing. It must have been so hard for you to lose someone so self-giving, so caring, so thoughtful. Thank you for sharing your loved one with me. I do not deserve this gift, but I receive it freely, with the resolution to extend that same self-giving, that same care and thoughtfulness to every patient I encounter. I can do nothing else but continue to spread the love that your loved one has shared with you and with me.

Thank you.