

“My Gift”

*“The morning (program) was what could be described as inspirational and life-altering from a psychological point of view. Denice Klavano shared the story of her son's untimely death, and how the gifts they were able to share from his life in terms of organ and tissue donation so greatly affected the lives of those people awaiting such a chance.”
(e-mail from author Sherri Topple)*

This powerful poem was written as a tribute to the power of a life lived, a son loved and a legacy that will live on through the recipients of donor gifts. While it is written in honour of Brad Howell, it truly seeks to recognize and honour all those individuals that have gone before him, those that will follow and the tremendous courage of donor families everywhere. My son, Brad Howell (Cpl.) was an army Reservist, only 18 years old, serving proudly with the Princess Louise Fusiliers. On March 13, 2006, he was tragically killed while working a security shift at the Halifax Armouries. Brad's exact words are quoted near the end of the poem. We were in the car and happened to be discussing donation. Brad said he would absolutely want to be a donor. He had turned to me, gestured to his body, and with that easy smile of his, said
...“Mom, it's only a rental”...

(Brad Howell, only 3 weeks before his untimely death)

- submitted by: Denice Klavano

“My Gift”

Dedicated to the memory, life and gifts of Brad Howell

Open your eyes; tell me what do you see?
Will you look at the world the same way as me?
Are you younger or older? Do you realize
The love that I witnessed through these two blue eyes.

Run cross the field; do you race with the team
Or go it alone as you follow your dream?
Do you feel the excitement, the thrill of the chase?
Do you see the same pride on your family's face?

Take a deep breath; see your chest rising higher
You're doing it now; no machines and no wires
Will you swim? Will you bike? There's so much to explore.
All these things you can do now; the choice is all yours.

The heartbeat that thunders inside of your ears
Is music to others, it's calming their fears
Does it feel very strange, to be beating inside you?

The rhythm of life; now it's cycling anew.

Tears – oh the tears – both of grief and of joy
Resurrecting one life, while another destroy
Confusion and guilt, as they offer their prayers
One side with great praise; while the other despairs.

My life was important; my life force was strong
All the dreams I was chasing ... my wish list was long.
I was loved by my family and loved by my friends.
I know you are, too. Now you've more time to spend.

My mother has gifts that I crafted with care;
Painted cards; pasta art; and a lock of my hair
Never once did I sense there could ever be danger;
Now my most precious gifts will live on in a stranger.

I know that my life has not been in vain,
Even though with the end, it has caused others pain.
Your life up to now was uncertain at best
Now it's your time to shine – put my gifts to the test.

I can't accept thanks; it would be incidental.
As I once said to mom, "Hey, it's only a rental."
Live it well; share your gifts; when life gets hard for you,
Please be strong, and remember, you live for me, too.

-Sherri M. Topple
March 30, 2008