

A detailed line drawing of a lavender plant, showing several stems with clusters of small flowers and long, narrow leaves. The plant is positioned on the left side of the cover, with its stems extending upwards and outwards.

# Reflections from the Heart

*Student Reflections on the  
Gift of Anatomical Donation*



Kansas City  
University

These statements of gratitude were written by first-year medical and dental students from the Kansas City University campuses in Kansas City and Joplin, Missouri.

– **Felicia Harris, Gift Body Coordinator**



# Reflections from the Heart

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“Working with the donors has been an immensely rewarding and transformational experience. It has pushed me beyond my comfort zone and allowed me to engage with different phases of life, deepening my appreciation for the significance of donation. These donors were real individuals, each with families and unique life experiences. This is a rare, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that few people get to experience, and I am deeply grateful for the chance. Through this experience, I’ve been able to enhance my understanding of the human body, appreciate the unique qualities of each individual and learn skills I would not be able to elsewhere. This will help me better understand the complexities of human health, appreciate each person’s qualities and apply this experience in my future interactions with patients.”

**– Rahul Shah**

“Thank you very much for the valuable opportunity to study human anatomy. I learned a lot from the donors, and I am so grateful for the donors’ and their families’ sacrifices and kindness. I will always remember this meaningful experience and will apply the knowledge I learned to care for future patients.”

**– Courtney Tom**

“I would like to express my deep gratitude for the blessing that your loved one has provided for the enhancement of my learning at KCU. It has been a privilege to be able to better understand my coursework through the hands-on experience provided by the anatomy lab. I can’t imagine the sacrifice that each of you has given in delaying the complete celebration of the life of your loved one, and hope that you know that I greatly appreciate your generosity. Your loved one has been a source of great advancement in our knowledge and has helped to serve as part of the education of the future workforce in healthcare and we will hold them in our hearts as we continue our journey toward serving our community through healthcare.”

**– Taylor Mulqueeny**

“My donor was not only my first patient as a student doctor, but one of my greatest teachers. Being able to learn by seeing firsthand the way the body has been put together and designed was an invaluable experience that enabled me to begin to build the foundations of my knowledge base as a doctor. I’m incredibly thankful for my donor and for what they’ve taught me this year. To the families of the donors: **Thank you for your selfless sacrifice.** It’s something I will be continuously grateful for as I continue my journey in medicine.”

– Jordyn Maddex

“Being a doctor has always been my dream. A lot of people don’t fully know what this all entails, but having a donor body to learn from is the first step to begin our learning as student doctors. I just want to send my appreciation for the opportunity to learn, especially on someone you love. The generosity of the donors does not go unseen, and we truly loved and appreciated every moment we had learning with him.”

– Carli Wurdeman

“The education I have gained through the gifted body program has been invaluable. No words can sufficiently describe the generosity of those who continue to give to others even after their passing. Thank you for trusting us with your loved ones - we are forever indebted to them.”

– Morgan McLaughlin

“I am so grateful for these individuals for donating their bodies for me to learn the fundamentals I need to help people become healed. Everyone is different and learning these differences was so instrumental to my learning. I am so grateful for the braveness of these people; they’ve made it possible for me to be the doctor I can be.”

– Ian Curnutt

“I am so thankful and grateful for the selfless acts of this individual to serve as my first ever patient. I have so much respect for the decision to donate their body, and through them I was able to learn so much more about the human body than I thought could be possible. My donor played a pivotal role in my first year as a medical student and I can already tell that one day when I am a practicing physician so much of the foundation of my practice will be traced back to the experience I had with my donor patient.”

– Jason Lukes

“As a first-year medical student at Kansas City University, I have had the profound honor of learning anatomy through the selfless donation of your loved one. This experience has deeply shaped my appreciation for medicine and my understanding of the human body.

Coming into medical school, I never imagined myself pursuing surgery. However, this course has ignited a passion in me that I never expected, and I now find myself drawn to the field. This transformation would not have been possible without the incredible gift your family has given.

I want to extend my deepest gratitude for this extraordinary learning opportunity. Your loved one’s generosity has not only shaped my education but also my future in medicine. Their legacy lives on through the knowledge and skills I will carry forward to help others.”

– Amanda Tanaka

“Through your gift, we have reaped an exponential amount of knowledge, built confidence in our intuition, and created lasting relationships with our peers. We will always remember this experience as it has been paramount in our medical education and has provided us with unmeasurable potential as future physicians. We cannot thank you enough for your gift.”

– Chandler Brock

“I am very grateful to have been given the opportunity to learn from these donors who selflessly donated their bodies to science despite knowing that they would not be rewarded for it or otherwise incentivized. Their sacrifice has also granted me a chance to think about how I might be able to contribute to the medical and wider scientific community even after my own passing.”

– **Pranav Iyer**

“I am grateful for the opportunity that you and your loved one has provided to me, to support my education. The death of a loved one is never easy to overcome, however I hope you will find comfort in the fact that one of their final acts was that of a teacher, for which I will forever be in their debt.”

– **Daniel Barchers**

“Words simply cannot express how much gratitude I have for all of the incredible donors who decided to make one of the most significant contributions to the advancement of medical knowledge and practice. I will forever cherish their donation as an inspiration as I continue pursuing my passion for the medical field, striving to support all of my patients with the best care possible.”

– **Christianna Swift**

“I am deeply grateful for the extraordinary generosity shown by these donors and their families, which allowed us, as future physicians, to learn from real human bodies. It was a privilege to have such a profound and unique opportunity, one not all medical students receive, and I cannot fully convey how vital it has been for applying the anatomy knowledge I gained in class. While I cannot imagine how difficult it must have been to make the decision to donate your loved one’s body to science, please know their contribution will never be forgotten and its impact will carry on in the care we provide as physicians.”

– **Kushi Malhotra**

"The gift of your loved one to KCU is greatly appreciated. This is such a great opportunity for students and wouldn't be possible without the donation. Not only is this a great learning opportunity for students but it also built confidence and made friendships that would not have been possible without the opportunity provided by your loved one."

**– Sean Ryan**

"On behalf of our entire class, faculty, and the medical and dental community, we extend our deepest gratitude for the immeasurable gift your loved one has given to our education. As students, we have had privilege of learning from their generosity, and we hold their memory with the utmost respect and appreciation.

The study of anatomy is a foundational and sacred part of our journey to becoming healthcare professionals. Your loved one's selfless donation has provided us with invaluable knowledge that no textbook or lecture could ever fully convey. Through this experience, we have gained not only a deeper understanding of the human body but also a greater appreciation for the humanity, dignity, and sacrifice that accompany this gift.

As we reflect on this journey, we are reminded that behind every lesson learned was a life lived—a person with a story, a family, and a legacy. We honor their memory by carrying forward the knowledge and compassion instilled in us through this experience. Their generosity will continue to shape the care we provide to our future patients and the respect we uphold in our profession.

We offer our heartfelt condolences for your loss and our sincere gratitude for your support in advancing medical and dental education. Your loved one's contribution will never be forgotten, and their impact will live on through each of us."

**– Shi Cochran**



“I am deeply grateful to the donors who gave us the opportunity to learn in such a profound and meaningful way. Their selflessness has shaped not only my education but also my understanding of compassion and humanity. I will always carry the lessons they taught me throughout my journey as a doctor.”

– Elizabeth Torres

“One quote that comes to mind is from Albert Pine, “what we do for ourselves alone dies within us. What we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.” The selfless choice these people made will forever live on in the lives of the patients we save and the loved ones they have. I am eternally grateful to our donors and I will never be able to thank them enough for what they have done for us.”

– Holley Hu

“When I started medical school, I didn’t realize just how much I was going to learn in one year. The knowledge and experience that I have now after eight months of medical school were possible because of the donors. I will never forget that I had access to this education because of their selfless decision, and I will forever be thankful to them.”

– Mouna Farkouh

“I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to learn from your loved ones. Their selfless gift has given my classmates and I an invaluable knowledge that no book or lecture could provide. Because of their generosity, we will be better equipped to care as future physicians.

We honor their memory with the utmost respect and gratitude. Thank you for this profound gift.”

– Omar Mustafa

“Without the experience that the anatomy lab and donors have provided, I would be missing an invaluable part of my journey to becoming a physician. I will forever carry the knowledge and experience I gained from this, and for that I am eternally indebted to the donors and their families.”

– **Ambrose Chan**

“Gaining a lifetime of knowledge through the generosity of the donors both in life and after death is a truly humbling experience, and an integral part of my growth and learning as a future doctor.”

– **Arjun Mahajan**

“I want to express my deepest appreciation for the selfless gift of your loved one. The opportunity to study a donor body has been invaluable in shaping my understanding of anatomy and the human body. This knowledge will be essential as I continue my journey in dentistry.

I have the utmost respect for you and your families for allowing KCU students to learn through this incredible donation. We all carry a deep appreciation and gratitude for this opportunity, and we approach our studies with the highest level of respect. Again, we cannot begin to express how truly grateful we are.”

– **Grace Gaber**

“Thank you deeply for your incredible gift. The experience of learning from your loved one has been transformative. I now truly understand the saying that our donor is our first patient, and I approached each day with profound respect, striving to honor their sacrifice through dedicated study.

This experience has been essential to my medical education. Your loved one’s legacy will live on through the care we provide as future physicians.”

– **Hunter McKenzie**

“Firstly, I want to express my deepest condolences for the loss of your loved one. While we did not know your family member personally, their selfless donation for the sake of furthering medical and scientific education speaks volumes on their priorities and character.

I also want to thank you all, because your loved one’s gift also may have come with sacrifices on your end. We are so incredibly grateful to you all for allowing us this opportunity to learn. Your family members were treated as many of our first patients and allowed us to learn the intricacies of the body in a manner that would not be possible in any other medical setting.

I will never forget this experience and intend to carry the lessons I have learned throughout my career in medicine. Thank you again and thank you to our donors. May their memory be eternal.”

**– Kara Kellogg Faust**

“I am deeply grateful for the incredible gift your loved one has given to my medical education. Their selfless donation allowed me to learn in a way that no textbook ever could, providing me with an understanding of the human body that will stay with me throughout my career. Beyond the science, this experience reminded me that every patient I care for will have a life, a story, and a family who loves them—just as your loved one did. Their generosity will continue to impact countless future patients, and I will carry this gratitude with me always.”

**– Madison Hill**

“These amazing donations have been priceless additions to our medical education, which will allow us to go on to save countless lives. I am so deeply grateful for this sacrifice and will carry it with me for the rest of my life. I know their souls are being cared for in heaven for eternity, I will think of them forever.”

**– Hannah Hart**

“Our donor’s selfless gift has been an invaluable part of my education, allowing me to learn in a way no textbook ever could. I will forever appreciate their generosity, as I am confident that this experience has shaped the way I will care for future patients. Thank you — we are deeply grateful to the donor and their family for this profound contribution to medicine.”

– Rubina Thomas

“I just wanted to start my reflection by saying ‘Thank you’ to my donor. My donor may not have known the impact their donation would have on my success in medical school and future medical career, nevertheless, I am grateful to them for their contribution. My donor’s contribution was **more** than a resource to ace lab exams and understand that the trapezius muscle is located in the back and is innervated by the spinal accessory nerve. Their contribution was to better prepare and guide the future generation of physicians.”

– Ruth Ehie

“This experience is unmatched to any other I have had. I am deeply honored to have witnessed the wrinkles etched by years of laughter, the strength of muscles that once embraced loved ones, and the bodies that carried them through life’s journey. To see this delicate balance of life and death, to learn from it, and to find meaning in that duality has been profoundly moving. I am incredibly grateful for this extraordinary gift — the courage of this sacrifice and donation is truly inspiring. This opportunity has been immeasurably valuable, and it is one I will carry with me forever. Thank you.”

– Lily Myers

“Words cannot truly describe how grateful I am to you and your family for your donation to our community and the medical field as a whole. I chose to come to KCU because I knew that I would be privileged enough to learn from a donor — and I am forever indebted to you all for teaching me how beautifully intricate the human body is, and preparing me for a career in medicine that is grounded in science, but tethered by altruistic humanism.”

– Paige Berman

"I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to learn medicine with the help of your loved one. Choosing to donate a body for the education of others is not an easy decision, and I deeply appreciate this generous and selfless act. The knowledge I have gained through our donors is invaluable, and I want to express my heartfelt thanks and sincere gratitude."

**– Aisha Ghumman**

"Over the last year, I have experienced the most growth as a student in my academic career in large part because of learning that we did in anatomy lab. However, that would not have been possible with the selfless decision and sacrifice of your loved one to donate their body to science, and for that I am forever grateful."

**– Carter Anderson**

"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to learn. Your loved one provided an incredible gift to me and my fellow students. With this gift we will be able to help future patients with empathy and care."

**– Lexis Rosenberg**

"It cannot be easy having your loved one donate their body to our education. I remember seeing my grandmother in her casket at her memorial service, and I felt that was an important societal ritual that was so helpful in my own grief process. That experience has made me even more grateful for the gift your loved one and by extension you gave to me and my student doctor colleagues. Prior to coming to medical school, I had a foundational knowledge of anatomy, but there is truly no substitute for experiencing anatomy in person and understanding the three-dimensional structure of how our bodies are made. I marvel daily at the incredible structure and function of our bodies, and I am so honored to have been able to learn from your loved one. I will forever be grateful for the role they played in my education. The future patients I will help as a physician will benefit greatly from the gift your loved one has given."

**– Robby Wilson**

“The profound impact this selfless donation has had on my education and medical school journey is immeasurable. I would like to sincerely thank you, the families and loved ones, for giving me the opportunity to learn the amazing intricacies of the human body from your loved one. I will carry the knowledge I gained from them to my future patients and throughout the entirety of my medical career.”

– **Maninder Kaur**

“Throughout this year, I have often reflected on the incredible generosity of our donors. Their selfless decision to donate their bodies to science has deeply impacted my medical education and helped me grow not only as a student, but as a future physician. I learned anatomy not from a textbook, but from a real person — someone who had a life, family, and story of their own. I am incredibly grateful for their gift, and I will carry the lessons I’ve learned from them into every patient interaction moving forward.”

– **Abby Jacobs**

“The body donor I have had the honor of learning from all year has provided me the opportunity to have a complete understanding of the parts that make up the complex machine that we call the human body, and this will play a large role in helping me treat my future patients accurately. For that selfless donation, I am very thankful.”

– **Luke Metcalf**

“The time I have spent with your loved ones has been an invaluable experience. I will carry this experience with me throughout my career and my whole life. I was humbled to learn from their incredible gift. I can imagine the immeasurable memories you share with them, but please know they are incredibly significant to me as my first patient and guide.”

– **Erin Walden**

“Thank you, donor and family, for allowing us to pursue further medical school education through invaluable hands-on experiences for the betterment of the society in the future. Dissections and being able to see anatomy in real life has been extremely helpful in facilitating my learning and pursuit of becoming a physician.”

– **Nicholas Kim**

“I wanted to truly thank the donors and their families for their support. I know that in my group we talked a lot about the type of person that could have such bravery and that is so selfless that they would be willing to donate themselves, for our education. To families that have been kind enough to uphold their wishes and supported them and therefore us in our education, I can never repay the gift you have given us. I cannot imagine how difficult this has been for you all.

I can tell you; I have no doubt in my mind that having this opportunity has been something that I know has greatly improved my knowledge and I truly cherished every minute of it. I worked hard, for several years, during my undergraduate career to make sense of the human body by using other anatomy specimens, but there has been no comparison to what I have learned this year. I know it will serve me well in the future with my patients and their families.”

– **Jodie Schmitt**

“I send my deepest appreciation for your loved one’s invaluable contribution for my medical education. Being able to learn about the intricacies of the human body was a unique experience for me and would not have been possible without your generous donation. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I am deeply grateful for your generosity and know that I have not taken your gift for granted.”

– **Dawit Wubshet**

“On behalf of KCU’s Class of 2028, thank you for honoring your loved one’s wish to further medical education with the donation of their body. We are so honored, and so grateful that we were given the opportunity to learn from the donors this past year. Their impact on me and my classmates’ education is truly immeasurable.”

– Jackson Lee

“Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to learn from your loved one. My studies of the human anatomy and the subsequent knowledge gained would not be possible without this invaluable contribution, which has profoundly impacted my class and me. I know that our experiences and insights gained will make us better clinicians, diagnosticians, and individuals, in general. Personally, I looked forward to every day spent with your loved one because of the educational experiences the contribution afforded me. Although the classroom environment is beneficial for the learning of information obtained through our professors and class discussions, there is so much more to learn from actual hands-on activities. These exercises greatly aided my understanding and increased my passion for learning in order to help others. I hope you find consolation knowing that your loved one was treated with dignity and respect and has forever changed the course of my learning and my life.”

– McKenzie Robbins

“As a medical student, I have great respect for the donors and their families. Their selflessness has significantly impacted and advanced medical education for the benefit of others. It takes tremendous courage and a generous heart to donate one’s body to a cause they will never personally witness. I will always be deeply grateful to the donors and their families, because without them, our medical education would not be the same.”

– Maamoun Seklawi



“I am incredibly grateful to our donors and their families for their selfless donation to our education. Your generosity has given us the opportunity to learn in a way that goes beyond anything we could have imagined, and it will help us provide the best care to our future patients. Our lab group became so close through this shared experience, and we’ll always carry the donors’ legacy with us as we continue our journey as the healers of tomorrow.”

– **Carter Bracht**

“I want to express my deepest gratitude to the individuals who selflessly donated their bodies to enhance mine and my colleagues’ education. Their incredible gift was instrumental in deepening my understanding of the human anatomy and it shaped my growth as a future physician. Their gracious generosity helped me discover an admiration for complex anatomy and solidified my desire to become a physician. Such generosity and sacrifice will always be remembered with profound respect and appreciation, not only throughout the rest of my time in medical school, but throughout my career as a future physician. I am humbly grateful.”

– **Darius J. Shahbazi**

“We are deeply grateful to have been blessed by the generosity of those who donated their bodies to our education. This invaluable learning experience was only possible because of their selfless decision to serve not only our class, but the future of medicine and the communities we will one day care for. Their legacy will live on through every patient we help.”

– **Nicole Tego Contreras**

“It has been a great privilege and honor to have the opportunity to learn anatomy on a real human this year. I am very grateful for the generous individual who donated his body so that my classmates and I could learn. It is a selfless act that will hopefully be the reason one of us will save a life one day as physicians. It is vital to our learning as future physicians and for that I am forever grateful.”

– **Cali Carstens**

“Our donor helped me gain a newfound respect for the human body. He gave me an opportunity to learn all aspects of anatomy. I am grateful that I was given this opportunity as I know it has helped me in being a better clinician.”

– **Heather Sams**

“Thank you so much for providing such an invaluable educational experience. Each time I would go to lab to learn, I would pay my respects to the donors and make sure that I treat them with the dignity and respect that they deserve. I am honored to have had this experience and am forever grateful for the opportunity provided by these donors!”

– **Anastasia Sarkissian**

“The donors have been invaluable sources for my medical education, and I am grateful for their contributions to my future as a physician. They will forever have my sincerest thanks.”

– **Gabrielle Ramos**





