

Wednesday, May 6, 2009

Blacks urged to step up organ, tissue donations

by [Kathy Chaney](#)



At age 18, Mariah Madison, who was also a new mother, was focused on finishing school and motherhood.

What she didn't know she had to factor in was a failing heart.

Madison is one of the many Black heart transplant patients at Rush University Medical Center, according to the Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, a non-profit organization that coordinates organ and tissue donation and services to donors in northern Illinois and northwest Indiana

The high school senior, who was diagnosed with heart failure after the birth of her daughter in September, has one of only 150 temporary, battery-operated mechanical hearts in the United States.

“At first, I was depressed, angry and didn't want to talk with anybody, take my medicines or listen to the doctors and nurses. Then I realized that I had to learn to deal with this so that I can get better. I want to graduate with my class this spring, be a good mother to my daughter and become a pediatric nurse,” Madison said recently during an organ donation telethon at Salem Baptist Church's House of Hope.

Robert S.D. Higgins, M.D., chair of Rush's cardiovascular-thoracic surgery department, is Madison's surgeon.

He's the only Black doctor in the U.S. performing the type of surgery done on the teen while she awaits a donor.

But Madison knows that without a new heart, some of her dreams may not come true, and urged all listening and watching to consider being an organ donor to help save a life.

“A transplant would allow me to do all of those things not only for myself but hopefully to make my donor proud of the way I’ve used their gift,” she said.

To read the rest of this article, subscribe to our [digital](#) or [paper](#) edition. For previous editions, [contact us](#) for details.

Copyright 2009 Chicago Defender. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.