



The Colby Foundation

a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit foundation
EIN # 88-0445730

Trustees:

John Cassani, DO, MBA
Starla Cassani

Colby's Story

This is the story of the Colby Foundation's namesake. It is a story of profound loss; but, also of hope...and the healing journey of Colby's family.

On June 3, 1993, 14 month-old Colby, left unattended in the bathtub by a babysitter, slipped under the water and drowned. Despite heroic efforts by medical personnel, Colby died at the hospital. His parents were given time to say goodbye in the hospital room. Colby's mom, Starla, remembers, "I knew what was going on, but I didn't want to hear the words."

Although John, Colby's father, is a family practitioner he did not immediately think of organ donation during this time of grief. Fortunately a physician had the courage to ask the difficult question: "Would you donate your son's organs?" Amid indescribable despair, their decision to donate gave the Cassanis a profound sense of hope and added new meaning to Colby's brief life. It took John and Starla only minutes to agree to proceed with the donation.

Colby's life was short but his legacy is far-reaching in the lives of those who received his organs. His kidneys were transplanted into a twenty-seven year old man. His liver was implanted in a two-year-old girl. And his heart was donated to a five month-old boy. All of the transplants were successful.

As some donor families do, the Cassanis reached out to the organ recipient families. They began by writing letters through their transplant coordinators to all the recipients. The family of Brayden, who received Colby's heart, chose to write in response. On the first anniversary of Brayden's heart transplant the families spoke for the first time. "Once we started talking, both families realized there was this phenomenal connection between us" Starla stated. When Brayden was three, the families arranged to meet for the first time. "As we got off the plane, Brayden ran into my arms, hugged me so tight and handed me a single white rose," Starla says. More than twenty years later, the families continue to enjoy a loving friendship.

The Cassanis established the Colby Foundation (www.colbyfoundation.org) in 1995 as a way to honor Colby's memory and to inspire and educate others about organ and tissue donation.

The Colby Cassani Endowed Lectureship Series, funded by the foundation, has already educated over 5000 attendees throughout the United States.

To arrange an interview with Colby Foundation founders, John and/or Starla Cassani, contact us at info@colbyfoundation.org

Increasing awareness regarding organ and tissue donation in the national community