

Hi, my name is Emily Starman and I'm a second year dental student here at the University of Iowa. Personally, I have been lucky enough to be touched multiple times by the Deeded Body Program throughout my education. During my undergraduate years at Luther College, I awaited my senior year anxiously to have the opportunity to take the Human Anatomy course. I always knew I wanted to take the course, but I equally was hesitant because I knew it would be a difficult and moving experience. I lost my own father just before starting my freshman year of high school to Stage IV colon cancer. I wondered if this course would stir up the always present feelings of grief and loss that stuck with me and seem to reveal themselves often at unpredictable times. However, throughout the course, I was surprised to feel an indescribable sense of comfort in learning about the human body and the way in which it worked and how diseases could progress. I thought about my dad often during the course, and I'm positive each of my classmates this past Spring drew on personal experiences through out as they learned from each donor.

At Luther, I was motivated to take the Gross Anatomy course knowing that I wanted to prepare myself for dental school. I learned so much during that one semester, but learning in the medical field is never-ending. You learn new things each time you take a course like this. Each experience, each day in the lab, each donor is special and unique. Each donor makes a huge difference in our understanding of medicine, science, and the human body. And each donor is a symbol of immense altruism and strength.

At the University of Iowa my classmates and I discovered the human body from a new perspective, as future dentists. Although we only surveyed the upper portion of the body, we strived to become experts as we studied the head and neck in great depth, as well as the complexities and intricacies of the hands which will guide our skills and ability to restore patients' oral health throughout our careers. We have immense gratitude for the gift of education that each donor gave us. The opportunity to learn, visualize, and trace the nerves that innervate the teeth that we will treat, but also the muscles, salivary glands, lymph nodes, sinuses, and vasculature that are crucial to maintaining oral health. As dental students and emerging health care professionals, we strive to educate our patients about oral health's impact on total health. We are lucky to learn about the human body and physiology as a whole from each donor as it is integral to patient care.

Though we can all share how much we learned about anatomy from this course in terms of facts, most of all we gained a new appreciation for what it means to be human. With humanity also comes a wide array of emotions. Many of which we experienced or were able to recognize and respect that our classmates were experiencing. Fear, excitement, feeling overwhelmed, curiosity, accomplishment, sadness are just some that come to mind. I think I can speak for most of my classmates when I say that we all can point to many of these different expressions throughout the course. It was important to take time during the course to reflect; to take a step back and acknowledge the emotional impact this course has on students, but also the sacrifices and decisions that donors and their families have made in order to provide us these irreplaceable experiences. Your loved ones gave us the gift of relationship and connection. We connected with them, our classmates, and even ourselves more deeply than ever throughout the Spring semester. One classmate of mine shared that in discussing the course with her family, her mom even expressed a new desire to become a donor herself one day. She is inspired by the impact these donors continually have on students. As Dr. Hoffman

expressed during his introduction of the course, “you will learn that we are all more alike than it may appear” We are all human and I think this has a unique significance for each one of us here today.

Continuing to look back on our time during the past semester, we are forever grateful for the support and generosity of families and donors that foster growth: both personally and professionally in the coming generations of medical professionals.