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'I'm thankful to get to see'

Firefighter's death gives mother's co-worker gift of sight

by [Lori Kersey](#)

Staff writer

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- They've been co-workers for a year now, but there's a deeper connection between Nancy Jividen and John Shuman than just their jobs at the Walmart in Cross Lanes.

This fall, while Jividen attended the funeral for her 36-year-old son, Shane, Shuman was undergoing surgery to help him regain his vision -- with the help of one of Shane's corneas.

"Usually [John] starts crying when he comes to see me," Jividen said earlier this month. "He's just so appreciative of it. Just so thankful."

Shane Jividen, chief of the Eleanor Volunteer Fire Department, died after an all-terrain vehicle accident near Webster Springs in early September. He had been to the Bergoo Bash, an annual fundraising event for the Webster Springs Volunteer Fire Department.

No one is sure exactly what caused the wreck.

The evening of the accident, Shane's cousin told Nancy, Shane's four-wheeler wouldn't start and he was sitting on it by the road. A little later, the cousin drove by again and found Shane in a ditch by the road with his four-wheeler overturned on top of him.

Nancy Jividen and her daughter were watching a football game in Parkersburg, where Nancy's granddaughter is a cheerleader, when they heard that Shane had been airlifted to Charleston Area Medical Center.

"I know they sometimes HealthNet people who don't need to, so I thought, oh, he'll be OK," Nancy Jividen said.

Her son had three skull fractures and bleeding on his brain.

The accident happened on a Saturday evening. By the next evening, Sunday, Sept. 1, doctors determined he was brain dead.

Shane was a parts technician for Rudd Equipment Co. He liked his four-wheeler, his racecar and his schnauzer, Chief Kudo. He liked to hunt and to watch WVU football.

Nancy jokingly refers to Shane as "hell on wheels," but then concedes, "He wasn't really that wild."

At the last WVU-Marshall football game, Shane and his cousin Shannon were kicked out of the stadium. Nancy isn't sure what the two men were doing to warrant it.

"It's hard to tell," she said, chuckling.

The Fire Department, where he started volunteering when he was 16 years old, was his life, Jividen said.

As his decision to be an organ donor might suggest, Shane was a very giving person, Nancy said.

After his death, Nancy found a restaurant receipt for nearly \$300 in his wallet. He had treated his fellow firefighters to dinner while they planned the trip a few days before. He always picked up the bill, no matter what, Nancy Jividen said.

"He'd give you the shirt off his back and he'd say, 'Mom can I borrow [some money?]" She said, laughing.

When someone dies, his or her organs can save up to eight lives, said Misty Enos, director of professional services and community outreach for the Center for Organ Recovery and Education.

A person's heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, pancreas and intestines are life-saving donations. Corneas, tissue and skin can also be donated to enhance lives, Enos said.

The easiest way to register as a donor is to go to www.donatelifewv.org and sign up, Enos said. Registering there lets the state DMV know you're a donor. If you do, the next time you get your license renewed your license will reflect that, she said.

The gift of sight

At least six people benefited from Shane Jividen's organs, his mother said. His liver, both kidneys, both corneas and a heart valve were donated. He had pneumonia, though, so his lungs were not suitable.

Nancy Jividen and John Shuman didn't know each other well. She works in the Walmart store office and he's on the sales floor.

They aren't extremely close now either, she said, but Shuman stops to speak with her now frequently now when he goes by the office.

"[It's good] just knowing that a part of Shane is still alive," she said. "Just knowing that Shane helped him see."

Shuman is a retired paramedic and chaplain from the Kanawha County Emergency Ambulance Authority. The Cross Lanes resident also served as a firefighter from the Tyler Mountain VFD before a back injury forced him to retire.

He and Shane Jividen attended training together. "I didn't know Shane really well, but I did know him through fire school," Shuman said.

Shuman has a condition called keratoconus, a progressive steepening and thinning of the cornea, said his surgeon, Dr. Heather Skeens of West Virginia Eye Consultants. The cornea becomes warped, and the light that enters the eye is scattered, so that there isn't a clear, focused image that going into the eye. That causes distorted or impaired vision.

"At [John's] level, the cornea transplant is the only thing that would have helped him," Skeens said. "There are other ways to treat keratoconus, but not at the level that he was."

Shuman's other eye wasn't as bad; he needed only a contact lens to correct it.

Skeens performs cornea transplant surgeries weekly, she said, but Shuman's was the first time she'd ever had a patient who knew his donor.

"I got chill bumps," Skeens said. "That's never happened to me before. ... People don't think [corneas] are as significant as a liver or kidney, but [with] cornea transplants, I always think, there has to be a donor."

Skeen said Shuman's story is a perfect example of the importance of organ donation.

"He can have 20/20 vision again," she said.

Since the surgery, Shuman's vision has improved and continues to do so, he said.

Nationally, 120,000 people are waiting for a life-saving organ transplant. Of those, 800 West Virginians are waiting. Enos said people should educate themselves about organ donation.

The need for donated organs is a health-care crisis, she said. It's not true that a medical team will let you die if they know you're an organ donor, she said. And through organ donation, the family of the dying person gets the peace of knowing their loved one's loss helped people live.

"Nancy's son is a hero," Enos said. "He saved lives."

As for Shuman, the 52-year-old is just happy for his vision, and for Shane Jividen's gift.

"I'm an older guy, but I have a young eye," he said. "I'm thankful to get to see."

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