

Thank you, Charlene (Lammers – public relations for Ariens), for that kind introduction.

(((Good morning everyone – only in Wisconsin can you start the day with a brat fry.)))

I first want to extend my appreciation to families of organ donors and recipients for traveling to be here this morning.

They turned tragedy into triumph ... these special individuals reached within themselves and gave the gift of life. And they should be commended for their depth of compassion, generosity, courage and sacrifice.

I also want to thank Mary Ariens, President of the Ariens Foundation, for her generosity. Ariens is a wonderful Wisconsin corporate citizen, and its sponsorship of Ryan is a testament of their commitment to improving the quality of life in Wisconsin and America.

And it's good to see Senator (Peggy) Rosenzweig and Representative Jim Kreuser (CREW-ZER) here as well. Thanks for joining us this morning.

Lastly, and most importantly, I want to welcome Ryan Tripp to America's leader in organ procurement and organ transplantation – *the great state of Wisconsin*.

Wisconsin welcomes Ryan with open arms ... it was his selfless determination in 1997 to save the life of a very young child named Whitnie Pender that raised the issue of organ donation to a new level. And two years later, Wisconsin is proud to be a stop on his whirlwind tour of our nation's capitols all in the name of the gift of life.

Ryan's efforts helped to raise over \$10,000 – and in the process he set a world record for the longest lawn mower ride. Ryan rode his mower 3,116 miles from Salt Lake City, Utah to Washington, DC. It took 42 days to make the trip, and he traveled through 19 states to break the world record.

This year, Ryan is determined to set yet another record by mowing the lawn at every state capitol in America in 75 days – bringing the important message of organ and tissue donation into the homes and workplaces of people in all 50 states.

Obviously, Ryan is a very special young man.

Ryan is a great example of what a determined person can do ... how *one* individual can change things for the better and make a difference in the life of another. In the case of young Whitnie Pender, it wasn't just a matter of making a difference – it was matter of life and death.

Just like Ryan, the state of Wisconsin has made a very special commitment of its own to become the nation's leader in the procurement and transplantation of organs – providing a vehicle for more than 600 people each year to begin life anew.

Wisconsin is home to two of the nation's strongest organ procurement organizations and transplant

hospitals – the Wisconsin Donor Network based at Froedtert Memorial Hospital and the University of Wisconsin Hospital.

Through their leadership, Wisconsin operates one of the most efficient organ procurement programs in the country, consistently ranking in the top five organizations in the country every year.

But as successful as we have been, there is still much more we can do. In Wisconsin, there are more than 1,100 waiting for a transplant. And nationally, there is a new name added to organ transplant waiting lists every 16 minutes.

When you consider that 85 percent of the public support organ donation yet only 30 percent of the public has actually signed a donor card or discussed the issue with their families – there is a lot of room for improvement.

Wisconsin, as the nation's leader, is taking the lead by adding an organ donor procurement coordinator to

the Department of Health and Family Services who will work to enlist more people as donors.

Wisconsin will do better and we will set a higher standard.

We are a very giving state. Working together, we can give the greatest gift of all to our citizens – a healthy life.

I encourage everyone in Wisconsin to put the organ donor sticker on your driver's license and sign the back ... it is so important to talk to your family ... to talk to your loved ones and let them know that you want to be an organ donor.

Every day is a struggle between life and death for these individuals -- their hopes and prayers for the future lies in the generosity of people like you and our governor's gift of life medal recipients.

Each year Wisconsin honors the families of donors for their sacrifice and courage at the Medal of Life

Ceremony, the very first of its kind in the nation. At the ceremony, I have the distinct honor of presenting each of them with a Governor's Gift of Life Medal.

Today, in honor of the our young visitor and his mission to raise the awareness of organ donation, I am proud to present to Ryan Tripp an Honorary Governor's Medal of Life.

(give medal to Ryan)