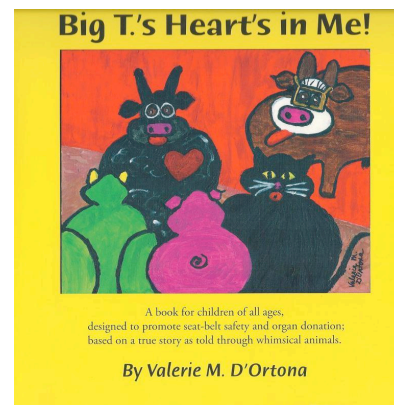


A Review of
Big T's Heart's in Me! (2010)

Author: Valerie M. D'Ortona

Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

This beautifully illustrated book “for children of all ages” fills a void in resources to help young children understand the concept of organ donation. What makes this even more unique is that it is based on a true story and promotes both organ donation as well as seat belt safety.



Colorful, whimsical and entertaining as it educates, the author’s artistic talent comes through in sharing the story of her 33 year old son, Tony, who in an accident without seat belt fastened, faced death much too early in life, but who went on to save other’s lives in donating his organs. Valerie shares the highlights of his story by way of a background introduction, giving the adult reader material to make their reading to a young audience even more meaningful than if this were “just” a pretty storybook for children.

In the story of animals who speak, “big Toby” (her Tony) is a bull who is killed in a truck accident which serves as the foundation for the story. Eight other animal characters “live” the experience of hearing about the loss of their bigger than life friend. Toby was an organ donor and his story as told in the brief narrative of 28 pages has all the elements we would have seen in a news article report of the real life Tony’s accident. The book concludes with a glossary of terms and a page of actual photos of Tony in the various stages of his growing up with family and friends. These pictures and that background story serve to make the lesson so much more than just a children’s book, adding the real life dimension that will hopefully make a life changing insight to the reader’s lives.

The author’s back cover summary says it all: “Sometimes life can present us with situations for which we have not prepared. ***Big T's Heart's in Me*** follows a close-knit group of barnyard animals on an educational journal where the sudden loss of a friend teaches them that life can go on.” This is a beautiful real-life story that can be enjoyed by children everywhere and that will touch not only their young hearts but also the heart of the parent or grandparent (or teacher) who may be reading it to them. Wouldn’t it be great if this book found its way into school libraries or pediatrician’s offices for many more to find it? “Yes!” it certainly would.

Thank you, Valerie, for sharing your son and your talents in the gift of your powerful message given in this unique way.

To obtain a copy of this book, go to www.isabelsworld.com.

Brief bio:

Jim Gleason, receiving his own heart transplant Oct. ’94, retired after 37 years with Unisys Corporation in 2005, is a volunteer with The Gift of Life Donor Program, NKF and UNOS as well as a nationally recognized speaker and author. His own book, ***A Gift from the Heart***, is offered free in thanks to his donor family and can be viewed on-line or obtained on PC disk PDF format by contacting him at GLEASONJIM@AOL.COM.