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Paris youths take to the streets in support of organ donation

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A small group of civil service volunteers in Paris is waging a spirited campaign to teach citizens about organ donation. Literally taking to the streets, the group will spend the next six months initiating face-to-face interactions with passers-by in the hopes of raising awareness for this important issue. At the very least they hope to inspire reflection.

Ranging in age from 18 to 25 years, the group of eight young adults is cruising the streets of the city, having already logged after six weeks in the field over 1750 individual interviews. Ranging in time from 4 to 12 minutes, the face-to-face encounters have so far resulted in over half of those Parisians interviewed immediately committing to becoming donors. Slightly less than half of those interviewed left with an informational guide saying they'd think about it, while less than 2 percent said they remain firm against donating.

Organ donation a touchy issue

The issue of organ donation is a touchy one, since it involves talking about mortality. Mostly for this reason, people often are reluctant to engage in discussion. Other factors inhibiting people from choosing to donate are concerns regarding certainty of the donor's decease, religious barriers prohibiting donation and fears about what kind of body the family of the deceased will receive back after organs are procured. Still others worry they may not receive proper medical treatment if they register to donate. The Paris group hopes to transcend these barriers by using the innovative face-to-face contact to offer up information in a friendly, approachable way.

According to Olivier Coustere, kidney recipient and founder of the French Sport Transplant and Dialysis Federation [Trans-Forme](#),

Over 16,000 patients were on the waiting list in 2011 in France for a donation. Of these, just 5,000 have received a life saving organ.

Coustere says the most significant detail revealed by the encounters to date is the fact that roughly half of the Parisians interviewed had never spoken to those closest to them about their views on donation. After receiving the volunteer's information and discussing the issue informally on the street, nearly 97 percent left saying that they now felt motivated to share their decision with family and friends.

The project is being undertaken in Paris thanks to Trans-Forme, whose mission is to raise awareness for organ donation as well as to rehabilitate transplant recipients through sport and La Voix Publique, a Lille-based company engaged in organizing face-to-face campaigns for raising awareness for causes in the general public interest.

The project is part of the French Youth Ministry's civil service program; a program that places young adults 16 to 25 years of age to work with associations and NGOs. The internships last from 6 to 12 months and cover topics of general interest to the public. In preparation for the project, the volunteers received 30 hours training with the French Biomedicine Agency, a major resource for organ donation information. The group also met with doctors and patients.