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organ & tissue donation  
& transplantation

# Clinical update

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## Gift of Life Celebrates Record-Breaking Year of Successes

GIFT OF LIFE IS PROUD to celebrate its 35th anniversary on the heels of the most successful year in its history. The dedication shown by the members of this region continually confirms the tremendous support organ and tissue donation receives, and 2008 showed just how committed the community is to saving lives.

In 2008, the gifts given by 428 generous organ donors allowed *Gift of Life* to coordinate a total of 1,152 life-saving transplants. This record occurred because of those donors and their family members who looked past their own tragedies and chose to save or enhance someone's else's life. *Gift of Life* also coordinated record numbers of tissue donations, more than 1,900 in total, that will greatly improve the lives of thousands of tissue recipients.

"We continue to see such a strong commitment from the people in this region, showing their dedication to saving lives in record number," said *Gift of Life* President and CEO Howard M. Nathan. "We are especially proud of our dedicated hospital partners and their compassionate commitment to organ donation and providing hope to those waiting for their second chance at life."

For *Gift of Life*, 2008 also proved to be a very successful year in other facets of the organization. *Gift of Life* was proud to recognize the work of all of our hospital partners who help support donation and worked diligently to ensure every family has the opportunity to donate. The outstanding efforts of 18 of these hospitals were recognized with Medals of Honor from the federal **Department of Health and Human Services** this past October – the most hospitals of any region in the nation. *Gift of Life* also continued its successful Champion Training sessions, hosting more

than 600 hospital professionals over the course of 2008.

In 2008, *Gift of Life* organized its most successful Dash for Organ Donor Awareness to date, with more than 5,000 people helping to raise \$400,000 on April 20. Success was also the name of the game for Team Philadelphia, the largest team participating at the 2008 U.S. Transplant Games in Pittsburgh, coming home with the most medals in the history of the Games.

In New Jersey, the passage of the Hero Act in July 2008 placed organ and tissue donation in the forefront, as championed by Senate President Richard Codey. Starting this year, the legislation will set in motion the creation of curricula about donation that would be taught throughout state high schools, colleges and medical schools. An online registry for residents to add the donor designation will be in place by April of this year.

"Even after more than 30 years at *Gift of Life*, I am continually heartened by the work we do in this community, and the continued outpouring of support we receive," Nathan added.



*Gift of Life* founders join staff to kick off the celebration of the 35th anniversary during a staff meeting on January 21. From l to r, *Gift of Life* Vice President of Clinical Services Richard Hasz, Dr. Clyde Barker, Dr. Aaron Bannett, *Gift of Life* Vice President of Administrative Services Jan Weinstock, and *Gift of Life* President and CEO Howard M. Nathan.

## ER Department Plays Crucial Role in Donation

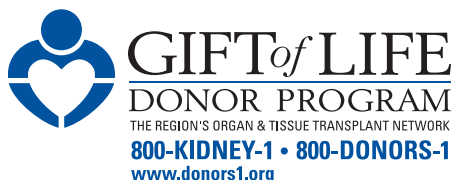
From the moment a patient enters the Emergency Department, the goal of the entire healthcare team is to save that patient's life. If all those options have been exhausted, end-of-life care to families needs to include the opportunity for organ and tissue donation. Every family deserves to have the highest level of end-of-life care, and that includes the chance to save lives through organ and tissue donation.

Recently, the medical team at **Frankford Hospital-Torresdale Emergency Department (ED)** identified their patient as a potential organ donor and proactively made a timely referral to *Gift of Life*. This call began a process that ultimately resulted in organ and tissue donation and ended the wait for three people who received lifesaving organ transplants. In addition, two people received the gift of sight through cornea transplants, and countless others will benefit from the gifts of donated skin, bone and heart valves.

Many extraordinary events occurred simultaneously with this case, beginning with the excellent care provided from the moment this patient and her family arrived in the ED. In the midst of caring for this patient and her family, the ED staff recognized the clinical triggers to call *Gift of Life* that they had recently learned about at a *Gift of Life* presentation. Their patient was losing brain stem reflexes, required intubation and was appearing brain dead. All of these clinical conditions are triggers to make the referral call to *Gift of Life*.

The **Torresdale Intensive Care Unit (ICU)** and ED staffs effectively collaborated with *Gift of Life* to share both clinical details about the patient as well as important information about the family. It is only through this level of consistent communication that the donation process can unfold smoothly and seamlessly.

*continued on back*



# New Efforts Increase Opportunities for Tissue Donation

While not always as well-known and publicized, tissue donation is no less miraculous than organ donation. Transplanted bone can help rebuild a damaged limb and save it from amputation. A donated heart valve can save the life of a child in need of cardiac reconstruction. Donated corneas can restore sight, and burn victims can receive donated skin to help them heal.

Tissue donation and transplantation is a significant component of the work done at *Gift of Life*. In 2008, the gifts of more than 1,900 tissue donors provided tens of thousands of gifts to those waiting. In an effort to increase donation rates and provide more gifts for those in need, *Gift of Life* has been implementing changes in its consent process that will mutually aid patients waiting, donor families and referring professionals.

Formerly, *Gift of Life* would begin the consent process with loved ones of a potential

tissue donor several hours after the family left the hospital. Over the years, this has proven to complicate the process, as contacting the family becomes difficult. More importantly, delays begin to diminish the donation opportunity as the death-to-preservation time increases.

Starting in October 2008, *Gift of Life* began to collaborate with several hospitals in our region to initiate an earlier consent process. Based on experience, *Gift of Life* has learned that families can be best served if the Transplant Information Center coordinators have an opportunity to approach families with the help of the care team within the hospital setting. This not only provides additional support to the family, but also ensures the donation opportunity is preserved to its fullest, enabling the greatest quality of gifts to be donated.

As always, the care team at the hospital is an integral part of the process, working in

tandem with the transplant coordinators to determine if a family is prepared to discuss donation. In instances where this method was used, *Gift of Life* has seen a marked increase in consent – nearly 10 percent higher versus the former process.

“Although a more rigorous review must be conducted, the initial data indicates that families approached in the hospital setting more often consent to tissue donation than those who are approached at home,” said John Abrams, *Gift of Life’s* Director of the Transplant Information Center.

Another tool to better serve families of potential tissue donors is a new tissue donation brochure. The pamphlet started to be integrated into the process recently, informing families about tissue donation and how powerful the gifts can be to those in need.

*Gift of Life* will look to partner with hospital staff to include this brochure in materials given to families at the time of their loved one’s death. Families will then be able to review the information and understand tissue donation prior to speaking with a transplant coordinator.

*Gift of Life’s* mission is to provide support and comfort to families throughout the organ and tissue donation process, and these new methods ensure that goal.

## Crucial Role, continued from front

“The timing of this referral ultimately allowed the family to turn this terrible tragedy into something positive by helping others,” said Kathryn Hughes, RN, Transplant Coordinator at *Gift of Life*. “Over the course of the evaluation for suitability, we learned that the patient had designated on her driver’s license her wish to be an organ donor. It became very important to the family to carry out her decision.”

At Torresdale, the team has had huge success rates in identification of potential organ donation candidates in its ICU. The team of nurses in the ICU has done extraordinary work over the many years to provide support and a genuine caring attitude towards patients and families who have experienced life ending diagnoses, as well as being active in the hospital’s Organ Donation Council. The Organ Donation Council, along with many opportunities to educate the staff and the commitment of the trauma department, have all brought about these types of extraordinary outcomes.

“Throughout this past year in meetings with the Organ Donation Council, we believed it to be imperative to bring the ED staff into the Council and to help them understand the importance of early



*The dedicated care team at Frankford Hospital-Torresdale, from l to r, Gift of Life Hospital Services Coordinator Jessica Stillman, Nancy Cherone, Vice President of TC Site Administrator, Tina Donaghy RN, Megan Paul RN, and Michael Beshel, Director of Nursing Operations.*

identification of potential candidates,” Michael F. Beshel, Director of Nursing Operations, Frankford Hospitals, said. “The great teamwork that is exhibited with these types of patients is priceless and worthy of recognition.”

These cases are examples of many best-demonstrated practices such as initiating the timely referral of all patients with non-recoverable neurological injuries and partnering with *Gift of Life* to determine the opportunity for donation. These practices are implemented in an effort to improve the donation process, increase the number of patients transplanted and always to support families facing end-of-life decisions.

## Calendar of Events

A look ahead at some programs being offered for our Hospital Partners...

### Upcoming Donation Champion Trainings

- When:** Friday, April 17  
**Where:** Sheraton Hotel, Harrisburg, PA
- When:** Tuesday, April 21  
**Where:** Gift of Life Donor Program, in Philadelphia
- When:** Thursday, May 21  
**Where:** East Mountain Inn, Wilkes-Barre, PA

### For More Information:

Contact *Gift of Life’s* Hospital Services Department at 1-800-KIDNEY-1 (1-800-543-6391) or 215-557-8090.

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