

GIFT OF LIFE NEWS



A publication of *Gift of Life Donor Program*, the region's organ and tissue transplant network, serving the eastern half of Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Delaware.

Our Community: STRONG IN Spirit, Hope AND Generosity

AS 2020 DRAWS TO A CLOSE,
we would like to express our gratitude
to all of you – our dedicated Community –
for your ongoing support this year.

Throughout the pandemic, our team never stopped working to save lives. Faced with challenges and operational restrictions, we worked closely with our hospital partners to adapt our processes to ensure that donation and transplantation could continue.

Thanks to our volunteer ambassadors, we continued to raise awareness of the life-saving power of donation and the importance of registration.



To learn more about the people here, visit donors1.org/holiday

Faced with navigating in a new, virtual world, our resilient ambassadors found different ways to volunteer, to advocate through social media and to inspire others.

We are blessed to have the most committed and devoted community of supporters in the nation. As we close this year of extraordinary heroism, a time when the humanity and compassion of ordinary heroes showed us just how special our community is and how much we need each other, we hope that:

OUR COMMUNITY'S STRONG SPIRIT
BRIGHTENS
YOUR
AND BRINGS
Holidays
Hope
FOR THE NEW YEAR.

Thank you for being part of the
Gift of Life family.



A Donate Life Organization



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Staying Engaged, Informed & Inspired

Going Virtual

Gift of Life quickly transitioned programs to a virtual format this year to support everyone from hospital partners to young transplant recipients. Trainings, meetings and events held via Zoom, Facebook Live and other formats allowed us to reach supporters throughout our region and keep them involved. We even held a virtual summer camp! **Here are some highlights:**



CAMP JEREMY Summer day-camp activities included STEM, arts and crafts and music. Held in partnership with Girl Scouts of Eastern PA. Funded by a grant from the Sylvia W. and Randle M. Kauders Foundation. **20** young transplant recipients and their siblings participated

NATIONAL MINORITY DONOR AWARENESS MONTH

356,000+ people reached via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

COMMUNITY OUTREACH Targeted programming included high schools, colleges/universities, faith-based, hospital/medical and community organizations. **2,500** people reached

COMMUNITY SUPPORT **100+** hours of donor family counseling. **750,000+** people reached via "Coping with Emotional Impact of COVID-19" through social media and online/print publications

VOLUNTEER AMBASSADOR PROGRAM **57** new ambassadors. **100+** participants in 4 regionwide meetings plus Lunch & Learn series

COMMUNITY STRONG EVENT **500+** viewers. August 12 "Thank You" celebration for volunteers, sponsors and supporters

HOSPITAL SERVICES **440** hospital professionals educated via Donation Champion Program. **556** clinical professionals participated in virtual in-service programs and participated in October 22 Donation and Transplantation Summit. **243**

GIFT OF LIFE FAMILY HOUSE **8** support groups, **40** participants, **26** educational webinars, **1,321** participants. **TRANSPLANT PREGNANCY REGISTRY INTERNATIONAL** **87** transplant recipients added, new total **2,794**; **143** pregnancies added, new total **4,826**

LIFE & LEGACY CELEBRATION **3,500+** families invited to virtual ceremony honoring the legacies of last year's donor heroes

SAVING LIVES DURING COVID-19

Rebecca's Story: 'The Purest Experience of Happiness'

The world was reeling from the impact of the coronavirus when Rebecca Elkins was suddenly hospitalized, unable to see her daughter or any loved ones. Rebecca had become seriously ill after returning from a trip to Disney World with Lexi, 6, who is a cancer survivor.

Rebecca received a life-saving liver transplant despite the restrictions and daunting challenges caused by the pandemic. She spent time recuperating at Gift of Life Family House before returning home to Delaware.

"Coming home was the purest experience of happiness I've ever felt. I missed Lexi so much. I once again have the energy to walk the dog with her, help her with school, garden with her," Rebecca said.

"I hope someday to meet the family of the young man who made it possible for my daughter to have her mother."

"I want them to know that while I can never repay their son's gift, I think about him every day and feel their loss."



SPREAD THE WORD to Students & Faculty



College clubs, organizations and PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America) chapters across our region are encouraged to join the **Gift of Life College Challenge**.

Students can save lives by using our online portal to register new organ and tissue donors to help end the critical shortage of organs.

Groups will earn points by sharing information and driving engagement as teams from Drexel University and Susquehanna University did to become winners of the 2019 Challenge at the national level. Cash prizes will be awarded. The Challenge will run from February 14 - April 18, 2021. **For details, visit donors1.org/college.**

STUDENTS Earn Service Hours!

High school students throughout Gift of Life's region

have an opportunity to earn up to 10 community services hours virtually. We're inviting students to preview our new school presentation, **A License to Save Lives**, and provide structured feedback. More than 120 students from 18 schools in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware have participated so far.

For details, contact Colleen Duran at cduran@donors1.org

MICHAEL'S LEGACY

DONATION MILESTONE LED TO 44,000 LIVES SAVED



Gift of Life's first organ donation after circulatory death (DCD) took place 25 years ago thanks to a young hero and his compassionate family. Michael McVey's legacy went on to transform donation across the United States through his mother's passionate advocacy and *Gift of Life's* leadership.

DCD had been practically abandoned by the 1990s as brain death became the primary path to donation at most hospitals. Michael, 14, saved three lives through DCD after a tragic fall in 1995. His extraordinary legacy has grown to encompass more than 44,000 life-saving transplants nationwide as his case inspired a resurgence in the DCD.

"Michael is an example of how one person can change the world." said John Edwards, the *Gift of Life* transplant coordinator for Michael's case.

DCD offers families an opportunity to fulfill the donation wish of their loved one if that patient has a devastating, non-survivable neurologic injury, and if the family and patient's physician have jointly decided to withdraw mechanical (ventilator) support. Donation may follow after the patient has been declared dead by irreversible cessation of circulatory function.

With *Gift of Life's* support, Michael's mother, Susan McVey Dillon, spoke to groups of hundreds of physicians and nurses urging them to embrace DCD in the years following Michael's donation.

"It's still a story that needs to be told. There are still people who aren't aware of donation after circulatory death," Susan McVey Dillon said when reflecting on the 25th anniversary of Michael's donation.

With Michael's case as a rallying cry, clinical experts from *Gift of Life* traveled to 38 other organ procurement organizations to teach them about DCD. Since then, thousands of life-saving kidneys, livers and pancreas have been recovered from DCD donors. Thanks to advances in research and technology, lungs and hearts are now able to be transplanted from DCD donors.

L-R: Michael McVey's liver recipient, Santos Felix; Susan McVey Dillon; *Gift of Life's* John Edwards; and Dr. Abraham Shaked, who performed Michael's organ recovery.



"The heroic legacy of Michael McVey is extraordinary. Michael's donation, combined with his mother's passionate advocacy and *Gift of Life's* leadership in bringing DCD best practices to OPOs nationwide have helped save thousands of lives," said Howard M. Nathan, *Gift of Life* President and CEO.

Gift of Life continues to lead the nation in DCD donation. About 200 lives are saved by DCD donors in *Gift of Life's* region each year.

DONATION AFTER CIRCULATORY DEATH 1995-2020

Based on OPTN data as of 10/6/20

	ORGAN DONORS	TRANSPLANTS
Nationwide	22,864	44,265
Gift of Life	1,616	2,899

DONATION AFTER CIRCULATORY DEATH Offers New Hope for Heart Patients

Gift of Life coordinated this region's first Donation After Circulatory Death heart recovery in May followed by two additional successful heart donations in July thanks to innovative preservation technology. This milestone brings greater hope to patients who are in the end stages of heart failure and in desperate need of a transplant.

The very first heart transplant – performed by Dr. Christiaan Barnard in 1967 in South Africa – was from a DCD donor. Since then, brain death donors were the primary source of hearts.

Heart donation was a major exception in DCD for many years as the inability to pump oxygenated blood after death meant a higher risk for damage to heart tissue. Traditional cold storage for donated organs did not allow surgeons to fully assess heart function for transplantation in those cases.

Now, a revolutionary Organ Care System (OCS™) often referred to as a "Heart in a Box" preserves donor organs. The OCS restores the donated organ with warm, oxygenated blood, re-animating it until it can be safely transplanted.

The first DCD heart transplant in the United States was performed at Duke University in December 2019.

Expanding DCD donation to include recovery of the heart offers hope to thousands of patients. More than 250,000 people in the U.S. are currently at the end stages of heart failure and up to 15 percent are in desperate need of a transplant. There is huge disparity in the number of people who need a transplant and the number who actually receive one. DCD hearts can expand the donor pool by 30 percent, doctors say.



CASEY TRUST 25TH ANNIVERSARY

JUST \$3 HELPS SAVE LIVES

Pennsylvania made history 25 years ago with landmark legislation called Act 102, a pioneering organ donor law that establishes routine referral for hospitals and a driver's license organ donor registry. *Gift of Life Donor Program* was a leader in the creation and passage of the Act, which spurred a dramatic increase in organ donation and became a national model.

Governor Robert P. Casey's heart and lung transplant inspired the legislation, which included the creation of Governor Robert P. Casey Memorial Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Trust Fund. Residents can donate three dollars to the fund when getting or renewing a driver's license, photo ID card and vehicle registration. Their donations help increase awareness about the need for organ and tissue donation and inspire more people to register through education and outreach in all 67 counties.

Gift of Life celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Casey Trust as a milestone that supports our life-saving mission.

We also encourage all Pennsylvanians to participate in the second annual **PA DONOR DAY ON JANUARY 8, 2021.**

The date, 1/8, spotlights 1 donor's potential to save 8 lives through organ donation. Donor Day is a unifying observance during which we can all work to educate and encourage our family, friends, neighbors and colleagues to register as organ and tissue donors. Watch our social media channels for messages to share.

ABOVE: *Gift of Life* President & CEO Howard M. Nathan presented Ellen Casey, wife of the late governor, with a plaque in 2001 in honor of her husband's groundbreaking work to promote organ and tissue donation.

BE INFORMED & INSPIRED



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Sign up today! Go to donors1.org/eNews

MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS

Supporting Our Community

In August, *Gift of Life Donor Program* joined forces with United Muslim Masjid and Muslims Serve to provide 300 meals along with educational materials about donation to Philadelphians in need. Held at the start of National Minority Donor Awareness Month (NMDAM), the program was funded through an "It's About Life" grant from Donors Are Heroes, a volunteer-driven organization that supports *Gift of Life's* community education and outreach programs.

Also during NMDAM, transplant professionals, organ recipients, and *Gift of Life* Multicultural Affairs Coordinator Leslie Jean-Mary took part in eight Facebook Live presentations to educate and engage our multicultural community. This was one of dozens of programs to raise awareness in the community. These informative and inspiring programs along with a robust social media campaign brought our life-saving mission to thousands of people.

