

# GIFT of LIFE News



**GIFT of LIFE**  
DONOR PROGRAM

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.

## *Celebrating Our Caring Community*



May kindness and generosity  
BRIGHTEN YOUR HOLIDAYS  
and  
BRING HOPE for the new year.

THANK YOU for being part of  
*Our Family*

Your friends at  GIFT OF LIFE

Pictured are some of our community's caring advocates of organ and tissue donation. Learn more about them at [donors1.org/holiday](http://donors1.org/holiday).



A Donate Life Organization

Non-profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
Paid  
Philadelphia, PA  
Permit No. 862

**GIFT of LIFE**  
DONOR PROGRAM  
THE REGION'S ORGAN & TISSUE TRANSPLANT NETWORK  
800-DONORS-1 • [www.donors1.org](http://www.donors1.org)





# GENEROSITY AND GRATITUDE IN

## Gift of Life Transplant Foundation SUPPORTING FAMILIES DURING TRANSPLANT JOURNEY

### Such a Blessing

The stress of knowing her daughter, Sarah, needed a life-saving heart transplant was made much harder by the 100-mile distance between Patti Miletta's home and Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, where Sarah's stay included 42 days in the cardiac ICU. Patti had exhausted options for inexpensive local lodging; friends who lived the closest were still more than an hour's drive away. "I thought I might have to start camping out in the waiting room," Patti recalled.



Patti was ultimately able to stay at a nearby hotel with quick access to the hospital thanks to a Regional Transplant Family Support Grant from Gift of Life Transplant Foundation. "It was such a blessing," said Patti, who was able to give Sarah much-needed comfort and encouragement as Sarah did for Patti during her heart transplant 17 years prior.

**"Gift of Life is committed to supporting access to care for families in need of a life-saving organ transplant. We've found that supporting travel, meals and lodging is an important way of helping patients and caregivers throughout their transplant journey."**

—Jan L. Weinstock, Esq.,  
Chief Administrative Officer  
and General Counsel



### Helping Patients & Caregivers Across Our Region

- In Philadelphia, Gift of Life Howie's House provides lodging and supportive services to transplant families.
- Outside of Philadelphia, Regional Transplant Family Support Grants assist those receiving care at transplant centers in the eastern half of Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, and Delaware.
- Families have benefitted from more than \$400,000 in Regional Transplant Family Support Grants since 2019 thanks to Gift of Life Transplant Foundation.
- Transplant families everywhere can access virtual support through Gift of Life's Caregiver Lifeline Program.



### A Daughter's Precious Gift

Cathy Zeller faced a tumult of emotions when daughter, Stacey, became a kidney donor for her sister, Shelby. Shelby was in stage-4 kidney failure and feared dying connected to a dialysis machine; Cathy's life revolved around Shelby's care.

Finding a living donor was an answered prayer but Cathy had to watch both of her daughters undergo surgery. She was able to stay close by thanks to a Gift of Life Transplant Foundation grant to Lehigh Valley Health Network's Transplant Program, which covered a full week of lodging for Cathy along with travel and lodging expenses for Stacey's family.

# Our Caring Community

### Sending Love & Encouragement

## "He Would Have Wanted to Help You"

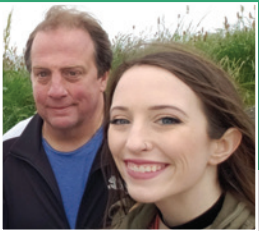
A family's decision to help strangers through the gift of organ and tissue donation can bring comfort and hope despite the heartbreaking loss of a loved one. Here are excerpts from letters sent by donor families to transplant recipients – words that capture the warmth and generosity of the greatest act of kindness.

Gift of Life's Family Services team facilitated the delivery of about 1,000 pieces of correspondence between donor families and recipients this year. Thank you to all donor families and transplant recipients who reach out to support each other.



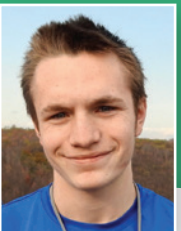
*"We knew instantly that Orlando would bring you as much love and joy as he brought us in the six years that he blessed our lives. We knew he would have wanted to help you. Thank you for giving Orlando's organ a place to continue to shine. We love him and he is now part of you."*

—Jessica, Martin & Family



*"I want to thank you for turning a tragic event into something positive. My dad was the bomb. He knew how to turn everything into a good time and he always wanted to help. I miss my dad every day but it means so much to me that you have more time with the people you love, doing the things you love. I thank you for carrying a piece of him with you."*

—Jaclyn



*"The loss of our son, Damian, was tragic but the fact that he was able to save your life brings me and my family some comfort. When we learned how many people he was able to help, it was an amazing feeling. Damian was our goofball with the biggest heart. He made us laugh all the time and his kindness to everyone was amazing. Live your life to the fullest as I know he would have done."*

—Melissa and Tom

## Life and Legacy CELEBRATIONS

We honored our heroic organ, tissue and cornea donors from last year at four Life & Legacy Celebrations this fall, including both in-person and

virtual options for donor families to attend. Each ceremony featured inspiring speakers, a photo tribute and special music. Donor families received the Gift of Life Donor Medal, matching lapel pins and a hand-made wrap as a symbol of comfort.

Thank you to every family who took part and to our *Gift of Life* staff and volunteer ambassadors for making these events so heartfelt and memorable. Our *Gift of Life* community remembers our donor heroes and their generous families with gratitude every day.

## TREASURED MEMORIES

Gift of Life's 16th annual Memory Box Workshop and Ice Cream Social brought donor families together to create a personalized box or picture frame in memory of their loved one and enjoy an ice cream sundae bar to top off the evening.

Families of organ, tissue and cornea donors shared how healing it was to spend time thinking of their loved one and choosing decorative items which evoked memories. Families noted how good it felt to be with others who understand what they are going through and to know that support from *Gift of Life* continues.





CLINICAL CORNER

# HOSPITAL PARTNERS,

## Thank You for Your Strong Commitment to Donation

### HAP Donate Life PA Challenge

*Gift of Life's* hospital partners play a major role in sharing the power of organ, tissue and cornea donation and inspiring more people to sign up as a donor. The 2023 Donate Life Pennsylvania Hospital Challenge included 107 hospitals statewide working to make more people aware of the importance of donation and increase donor designations to strengthen the health of our community.

The Hospital Association of PA (HAP) partnered with the PA Department of Health and the two organ procurement organizations serving Pennsylvania – *Gift of Life Donor Program* and the Center for Organ Recovery & Education (CORE) – to support the Challenge.

*"Gift of Life Donor Program* applauds HAP and our hospital partners for bringing the inspiring message of donation and transplantation to countless patients, families, and staff through the HAP Donate Life Hospital Challenge," said Rick Hasz, President and CEO of *Gift of Life Donor Program*. "We are grateful to our hospital partners for their strong commitment to clinical best practices along with the compassionate care and support they provide for donor heroes and families. Through our close collaboration, we have made Pennsylvania a leader in organ donation and we will keep striving for the day when each waitlist patient receives a second chance at life."

## CONGRATULATIONS

to the health systems and 63 hospitals in *Gift of Life's* region for achieving honors in the Challenge!

They hosted educational programs to improve the clinical process for donation and transplantation along with special events to register new donors.

#### TOP HEALTH SYSTEMS:

First Place	Second Place	Third Place
Temple University Health System	UPMC North Central PA	Tower Health

#### TOP HOSPITALS:

First Place	Second Place	Third Place
Penn Presbyterian Medical Center	Temple University Hospital	UPMC Williamsport

Join **TEAM PHILADELPHIA** at the **2024 TRANSPLANT GAMES OF AMERICA**

**JULY 5-10, 2024**  
Birmingham, AL

- Honor the heroic legacy of donors, highlight the need for registered donors and celebrate the success of transplantation.
- Organ, tissue and bone marrow recipients, living donors, donor families and supporters are all invited.

Visit [TeamPhilly.org](https://TeamPhilly.org)

## 27TH ANNUAL DONOR DASH

*Gift of Life's* biggest celebration of organ and tissue donation is coming up in April 2024 as part of National Donate Life Month!

Follow *Gift of Life* (@donors1) on social media and sign up for our informative monthly eNews at [donors1.org/eNews](https://donors1.org/eNews) for details on events plus latest news and inspiring stories.



# CONGRATULATIONS, COLLEGE CHALLENGE WINNERS!

## POTENTIAL TO SAVE 5,000 LIVES

Fifteen Pennsylvania and New Jersey colleges participated in *Gift of Life's* 2023 College Challenge, registering 681 organ and tissue donors who have the combined potential to save more than 5,000 lives.

Each organization shared the importance of donation with students, faculty and staff through donor registration drives, special events, social media, and other activities to help save more lives. Thank you to all participants and congratulations to the winners!



### FIRST PRIZE

Temple University | Student Nursing Association

Students registered 122 people as donors through information tables, events with guest speakers, a large social media presence and participation in *Gift of Life's* 26th Annual Donor Dash. Their winning campaign included classroom presentations reaching more than 400 nurses.

### SECOND PRIZE

Chestnut Hill College | Griffin PR Organization

### THIRD PRIZE

Susquehanna University | Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) Chapter

### MOST DONORS REGISTERED

Temple University School of Pharmacy  
Organ Donor Advocacy Association

Registered 265 donors, the most of any school in the 2023 challenge.

STUDENTS & FACULTY

# SIGN UP TODAY

## to Help Save Lives!



- Registration opens November 1, 2023 for student organizations and clubs.
- Visit [donors1.org/college](https://donors1.org/college) or contact Dwendy Johnson at [djohnson@donors1.org](mailto:djohnson@donors1.org).
- 2024 College Challenge will run from February 14 (National Donor Day) through the end of April.



## CELEBRATING THE POWER OF DONATION

The second half of 2023 was filled with fun as we shared our life-saving mission with our community. Highlights included NATIONAL MINORITY DONOR AWARENESS MONTH (August), ORGAN DONATION AWARENESS NIGHT with the PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES and CAMP JEREMY, our annual day camp for young transplant recipients and their siblings. Thank you to all who participated!