

# GIFT OF LIFE NEWS



**GIFT of LIFE**  
DONOR PROGRAM  
A Legacy of **HEROES**. A Future of **HOPE**.

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.

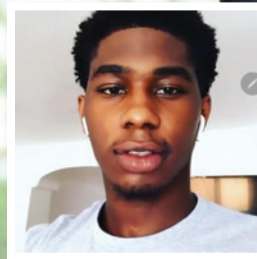
**This Minority Donor Awareness Month,  
Help Us Sign Up 50,000 More Organ Donors  
and Honor *Gift of Life's* 50 Years of Service**

## “Let’s Help Each Other”

For Hip-Hop artist Leslie Pridden, aka Philadelphia Freeway, the gift of life is something precious to both give and receive. He endured dialysis three times a week after being diagnosed with kidney failure in 2015. Thanks to an organ donor hero, Freeway received a transplant five years ago.

The joy of receiving his second chance at life was followed by a devastating loss when Freeway’s beloved son, Jihad (*inset photo*), died in 2020. Knowing the powerful impact of organ donation, Freeway supported the opportunity for Jihad to become a donor hero and save four lives.

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**TAKE ACTION!**

Sign up today, spread the word and bring hope to the thousands of children and adults awaiting a life-saving transplant. It's easy, private and takes less than one minute to sign up today at [donors1.org/register](https://donors1.org/register).



A Donate Life Organization

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Freeway's personal experience with organ donation fuels his passion as an advocate for *Gift of Life Donor Program*, which is honoring its 50th anniversary with a campaign to sign up 50,000 more organ donors. More than half of those waiting are from communities of color. Close to 90 percent of waitlist patients in our region need a kidney transplant.

"You can live a successful life on dialysis but the best thing for a person on dialysis is a kidney transplant because it increases your life expectancy," Freeway said. **"I had three risk factors for kidney failure, one being hypertension, another one being diabetes and, surprisingly, just being African American is a risk factor. That's why it's so important to me to raise awareness and try to give people a fighting chance to protect their health."**

Freeway is spreading the word that the high number of Black patients who need a transplant means that communities of color have great potential to save lives, relieve suffering and bring hope to their own families, friends, and neighbors by signing up to become an organ donor at [donors1.org](http://donors1.org).

**"High blood pressure, diabetes, and kidney failure are affecting our community at a rapid pace, but people are shying away from talking about it. So we're starting a conversation and, God willing, we'll be able to help each other,"** he said.

Freeway's advocacy includes serving on *Gift of Life's* new Community Advisory Board (see page 3) and performing at our 27th Annual Donor Dash (see page 5).

## HELP YOURSELF



"We only have one body, our body is our temple, and we have to take care of it. The best

thing to do is **get your blood work done** at least once a year and **keep up with your routine physicals."**

—Philadelphia Freeway



## Giving Back, LIFTING UP

Freeway's battle with kidney failure inspired him to launch Freedom Thinkers Academy, which provides low-cost workforce development programs in health and technology along with music workshops to promote achievement and help Philadelphia families rise out of poverty.

"I'm trying to give back as much as I can," Freeway said. "Having a new lease on life thanks to my kidney transplant makes me appreciate everything. I'm not taking anything for granted. I'm cherishing every moment."

Learn more online at [freedomthinkers.academy](http://freedomthinkers.academy)

# 5 THINGS TO KNOW about Organ Donation

- 1. The one and only priority for doctors is to save your life if you are sick or hurt in an accident. They don't have access to the organ donor registry and being a donor will not affect your life-saving care.**
- 2. Donation is not an option for any family until everything possible has been done to save their loved one in a hospital.**
- 3. Gift of Life's transplant coordinators, who are separate from a hospital healthcare team, help each family through their loved one's donation process with respect, care, and kindness.**
- 4. The family of a donor may have any type of funeral or burial arrangements for their loved one that they wish.**
- 5. You can save lives as an organ donor without putting it on your driver's license.** It's easy and private to sign up online at [donors1.org/register](http://donors1.org/register)!

# Urgent Call to Action: WE NEED YOU

To honor *Gift of Life's* 50 years of saving lives,

# HELP US SIGN UP 50,000 MORE ORGAN DONORS

and provide hope to the thousands waiting for a transplant.

**Go to [donors1.org/register](http://donors1.org/register)** today to make sure you are signed up on the national donor registry. It's fast, easy and private for people from every community to help save lives. Share the link with your family and friends to help reach our goal!

**Invite** *Gift of Life* to a tabling event in your town (health fair, festival, community event) or to speak to a local organization or school.

**Connect** us with a local organization or business for a donor registration drive, and a local house of worship for *Gift of Life Donor Sabbath* this November or any time during the year.

### FIVE WAYS TO HELP:

**Follow** *Gift of Life* on social media and share our posts. Tag @donors1 and use #GiftofLife50.

**Show** your support! Wear a Donate Life green wristband or lapel pin and tell people what it signifies. Display a *Gift of Life* "Donors Save Lives" yard sign.

**Share** our 50th "registry cards" – business-sized cards that are handy to carry and give out anywhere you go.



For materials, guest speakers and other resources, email [communityoutreach@donors1.org](mailto:communityoutreach@donors1.org)

Sign up for our inspiring monthly eNews for updates and more: [donors1.org/enews](http://donors1.org/enews)

## Building on 50 Years of Leadership

# Decreasing Barriers to Organ Donation

*Gift of Life Donor Program* continues to build on our 50 years of leadership in donation and transplantation by launching a Community Advisory Board. This new board is committed to saving lives by decreasing barriers to organ donation in Philadelphia, especially in communities with a high number of patients on the transplant waitlist and historically low donation and donor designation rates.

The board includes key leaders from city, state and federal levels, transplant recipients and donor family members bringing diverse perspectives to promote the power of donation through lived experience. They will provide a vital link between *Gift of Life* and Philadelphians, helping to raise awareness and address concerns through education and community engagement.

### Community Advisory Board Members



**Myra Brown**  
CEO of NWON Opportunities LLC and Yelram Properties  
Chair, Women's Way Board of Directors



**Belinda K. Mills**  
Chief of Staff, Pa. State Rep. Regina Young, 185th District



**Charlita Davis**  
Deputy Chief of Staff, Philadelphia City Councilmember Curtis Jones, Jr.  
Double Transplant Recipient



**Leslie "Freeway" Pridden**  
Founder, Freedom Thinkers Academy and Hip-Hop Artist  
Kidney Recipient & Donor Dad



**Rick Hasz, Jr., MFS, CPTC**  
President & CEO, Gift of Life Donor Program



**Tia Watson**  
Southeastern Pa. Regional Director for U.S. Sen. Bob Casey



**Earl C. Jones**  
Heart Recipient  
Gift of Life Volunteer Ambassador



**Melissa Young**  
CEO, Mash Strategies (Board Facilitator)



**Cynthia London**  
Donor Mom  
Gift of Life Volunteer Ambassador

## Essential Gift of Life Partners Coroners Honor Donate Life Month

Thank you and congratulations to Montgomery County Coroner Dr. Janine Darby, MD, and her team for making history by being the first coroner's office in our region to partner with *Gift of Life* for a flag-raising ceremony to celebrate National Donate Life Month (NDLM) in April. Dr. Darby called the Donate Life flag "a symbol of hope, gratitude and unity" as she paid tribute to the "lasting legacy of love and kindness" of donor heroes and their generous families who have given a second chance at life to thousands.

Thank you also to Delaware County Chief Medical Examiner Albert Chu, MD, and Bucks County Coroner Patricia Campi, RN, BSN, for hosting first-ever NDLM events at their offices in partnership with *Gift of Life*!

*Gift of Life* President and CEO Rick Hasz shared appreciation for coroners honoring donor heroes and for working with *Gift of Life* to support families who face a tragic loss. "Working together, our vital collaboration ensures donor families can

find comfort and hope in knowing their loved one can save lives and the coroner's investigation will be fully supported," he said."



# A Dazzling DONOR DASH!



### HIGHLIGHTS:

- 15,000+ Dashers from PA/NJ/DE & beyond
- 340+ Teams
- 200+ Volunteers
- Nearly \$700,000 raised
- Virtual Dash in 30 states & Washington, D.C.

## Sharing Love & Life

### Inviting All Houses of Worship

Signing up to become an organ donor is a decision to leave a legacy of love. *Gift of Life* urges all houses of worship to share this message along with personal stories and vital information about organ and tissue donation as we celebrate Gift of Life Donor Sabbath this November. *Gift of Life* joins people of all faiths to support those on the waitlist, donor families, transplant recipients and caregivers.

Faith plays an important role in the decision of many families to give or receive the gift of life. Help us dispel myths and share the fact that every major religion in the U.S. supports organ donation as one of the highest expressions of compassion and generosity.

### Ways to Participate:

- **HOST** a guest speaker.
- **HIGHLIGHT** a story of donation and transplantation from your congregation.
- **LIGHT** a Donor Sabbath candle in honor of donor heroes and patients awaiting a transplant.
- **PUBLISH** an announcement in your congregation's newsletter or bulletin and share information via social media. We can provide samples.

Speakers and materials are available for faith-based organizations and houses of worship. Contact Naja Killebrew at [nkillebrew@donors1.org](mailto:nkillebrew@donors1.org).

Scan here for our inspiring faith video and more!



Our 27th Annual Donor Dash on Sunday, April 28 was an inspiring celebration of the life-saving power of organ and tissue donation at a spacious, scenic new location, the Philadelphia Navy Yard. *Gift of Life* President and CEO Rick Hasz was joined by kidney donor and KYW Newsradio broadcaster Jim Melwert to host a cheering crowd for our biggest, most successful Dash ever.

Traditional Dash activities including the 10K and 5K runs, Kids Fun Run and 3K walk were expanded to include lawn games, food trucks, community organizations, health resources and more entertainment. Live performances featured Hip-Hop artist Philadelphia Freeway, a kidney recipient and father of a donor hero, along with DJ Gary O, Anton Milton & Glorified, Philadelphia School of Rock, and Temple Jazz Ensemble. Joining Freeway on stage was waitlist patient Phillip Davis, who performed his original song, "The Gift of Life."

The PME Drumline led the crowd for the day's grand finale: the 3K walk featuring thousands of families and friends. Thanks to our generous supporters and sponsors, we raised nearly \$700,000 for community education and programs that support donor families and transplant recipients!

## THANK YOU

### to our Donor Dash sponsors:

- Presenting Sponsor**: Solvita™ From one, to many.
- Platinum Sponsor**: mtfbiologics Science Driven. Patient Focused.
- Diamond Sponsors**: AltruVision A Lions Eye Bank, NEMOURS CHILDREN'S HEALTH, QUICK, TEMPLE HEALTH, VENTURE JETS.
- Silver Sponsors**: GLOBAL TRANSPLANT SOLUTIONS, Organ Recovery SYSTEMS.
- Bronze Sponsors**: eurofins, Donor & Product Testing, Gallagher Insurance | Risk Management | Consulting, Jefferson Health, NORA, PennMedicine Transplant Institute.
- Supporting Sponsors**: ChristianaCare Kidney Transplant Program • Cornerstone Institutional Investors, Inc. • Cozen O'Connor • Paragonix Technologies • AmeriHealth Caritas • Wegmans



## CONGRATULATIONS, Gift of Life's TEAM PHILADELPHIA!

**THANK YOU** to our Team Philly athletes and supporters from Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware! Look for details and photos from 2024 Transplant Games in Birmingham, Ala. in our next newsletter.