Donation Transforms the Tragic Tale of a Young Man's Death Into A Celebration of Life

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Cover Photo:
Four families with a special bond met for the first time in mid-May at an emotional, uplifting gathering at Gift of Hope. That bond, which transcends ethnicity, religion, economic status and geography, was formed by the life-giving legacy of 16-year-old Jermaine Cullum Jr., who gave life to three people as an organ donor.

Connections provides the Gift of Hope public and professional communities with news and information about Gift of Hope, organ and tissue donation and the importance of being a registered organ and tissue donor. We encourage you to share this newsletter with your friends and associates and learn more about donation by visiting GiftofHope.org. We mail Connections to people who have expressed an interest in Gift of Hope or the topic of organ and tissue donation. If you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please email your request to tsullivan@giftofhope.org.

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Gift of Hope has launched a new Safety Initiative to promote a safe and healthy work environment that protects Gift of Hope staff and, by extension, its many constituents.

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A new Message of the Month initiative aims to educate hospital professionals about various aspects of donation and the important role they play in helping to make donation happen.

The Wait: Monica Fox
Monica Fox needs a kidney transplant and is confronting the challenges that many people on the transplant waiting list face as she waits for the phone call that can save her life.

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Gift of Hope partnered with the Chicago Wolves hockey team on April 18 for a night focused on the gift of donation — with a little bit of hockey mixed in. The Wolves generously offered Gift of Hope 250 tickets to a game held that night at Allstate Arena in Rosemont, Ill., to give Gift of Hope staff members, donor family members and organ and tissue transplant recipients the opportunity to show their “purple pride” in being donation advocates. The Wolves also displayed the Gift of Hope name and website and the call to action to register as an organ and tissue donor prominently throughout the evening on Allstate Arena’s video display board and animated light signs located throughout the arena.

At the event, several donor families and transplant recipients were publicly recognized and honored on the ice and via the video board. Gift of Hope President/CEO Kevin Cmunt was on hand to perform a ceremonial puck drop. An outreach team was also on site to help educate Wolves hockey fans about organ and tissue donation and encourage them to share their support of Gift of Hope and donation via their favorite social media channels.

The Wolves pulled out a win in an overtime shootout, but Gift of Hope and organ and tissue donation were the real winners of the night by putting the Gift of Hope name and the donation message in front of more than 8,000 people attending the game.
In February, Gift of Hope unveiled an organization-wide Safety Initiative to promote a safe and healthy work environment that protects Gift of Hope staff and, by extension, benefits donor families, recipients, people waiting for organ and tissue transplants, and other constituents who interact with Gift of Hope.

The initiative’s major deliverable to date has been the creation of a Safety Committee charged with designing and implementing safety goals and education to ensure that the meaningful, life-changing work that Gift of Hope’s staff members do is performed safely across the board.

“A strong safety culture can and should be a cornerstone of our organization,” explains Kevin Cmunt, President/CEO of Gift of Hope. “And a strong, active Safety Committee is a key to building that culture.”

Improving safety, Cmunt says, will be employee-driven at Gift of Hope, empowered by management and respected by Gift of Hope peers. The organization’s 12-member Safety Committee, headed by Ronald Lynch, Supervisor of Tissue Recovery Services, is spearheading Gift of Hope’s safety plans and actions. The group has been at work since the beginning of the year to identify and correct unsafe work practices and conditions, create written safety programs and protocols and institute safety training across the organization.

The committee meets twice a month and reports its findings and recommendations at Gift of Hope’s all-staff Team Hope meetings held every other month. Members say the keys to improving safety are focusing on the job at hand, using the appropriate tools at all times and performing tasks correctly every time.

“Statistically, the most effective thing we can do to improve safety and reduce injuries is to think about safety right before we undertake a task,” Cmunt says. “It’s really as simple as that.”

Safety in the Screening Process
A prime example of Gift of Hope’s commitment to safety is what the organization is doing to ensure that organs and tissue are safe and suitable for donation. Gift of Hope recently implemented a rapid antibody pre-screening serology (blood) test for hepatitis B and C and HIV during tissue recovery. The highly sensitive tests, conducted by staff members in Gift of Hope’s Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics Laboratory, offer a rapid assessment of tissue donor suitability in the field or at Gift of Hope.

Before Gift of Hope implemented the rapid screening test, serology results took up to 72 hours. Now they’re instant. When possible, the screening is used in conjunction with Gift of Hope’s Donor Risk Assessment Interview to help determine tissue donor suitability.

“The rapid pre-screening tool gives us better sensitivity and specificity,” explains Gift of Hope Clinical Trainer Gregory Slawski. “This adds an extra level of safety.”

The tool is also being used as a pre-screening mechanism to determine suitability of donor organs before a U.S. Food and Drug Administration-mandated test is performed. “The FDA test really is the ultimate test, but this gives us very important safety information up front,” Slawski says.

Gift of Hope’s use of this innovative tool has drawn national attention and praise. Slawski presented webinars on the topic for the American Association of Tissue Banks in 2014 and 2015 when the FDA took notice of Gift of Hope’s early screening efforts. Representatives from the United Network for Organ Sharing also praised Gift of Hope for its efforts. “It’s another quality measure that puts us in front of the entire country and shows our commitment to safety,” Cmunt explains.

“We’ve put Gift of Hope on the map as an innovator in how we do tissue procurement and screening of donors at an early phase,” Slawski adds. “The work is continuing, and, of course, with safety, we can always improve.”

What’s more, with the attention Slawski’s webinar received, the manufacturer is developing an even faster, hand-held device that will screen specimens at the molecular level. “We’re looking forward to testing this with our rapid process in late 2015,” Slawski says.
Connections - Safety Is Job 1

Safety in the Lab
Gift of Hope’s Laboratory is also the site of another major safety initiative implemented at the organization. Each month, Gift of Hope’s lab technicians process about 4,000 blood samples of patients waiting for organ transplants.

That equates to more than 40,000 tests a year and involves the laborious work of uncapping samples, labeling them and separating them for storage for a potential matching process to be conducted later.

This year, Gift of Hope invested in new equipment that automates these tasks, saving not only precious manpower but also virtually eliminating the risk of human error and safety hazards.

Gift of Hope’s Laboratory has invested in new equipment that automates several procedures to reduce risk, eliminate the potential for human error and enhance the safety of transplant recipients.

“Manually uncapping a specimen tube creates an ‘aerosol’ of the patient’s blood that becomes airborne in the lab,” explains Carol Wasik, Gift of Hope’s Infectious Disease Specialist. “Since some patients on the waiting list may have hepatitis or HIV, airborne blood becomes a safety hazard for our staff.”

The new, self-contained “decapper” machine automates this process and eliminates the exposure risk. In addition, a new labeling machine automatically affixes barcoded labels to all specimens, and an aliquoting machine safely separates out samples for storage and later use. This ensures accuracy of the samples and enhances the safety of transplant recipients.

Safety on the Road
Gift of Hope is also taking its safety focus to the streets. Time is of the essence in organ transplantation. Once an organ leaves the hospital where it was recovered, the clock starts ticking.

How long the window remains open from the time of organ recovery to transplantation varies by organ. Kidneys, for instance, may be viable up to 48 hours after recovery, but hearts and lungs have a transplantation window of just four to six hours.

Because procurement can happen at any time, Gift of Hope’s Organ Recovery Services and Transportation staff members travel day or night, sometimes in poor weather conditions and in remote locations.

“Safety is always a major concern as the organ recovery team races the clock to get organs to patients waiting at the other end,” Lynch explains.

To ensure safety for all, Gift of Hope sent a team of its Transportation staff to the Autobahn Country Club in Joliet for defensive driving training. There, Gift of Hope’s drivers learned techniques to avoid accidents, control and recover from skids and make emergency lane changes. Gift of Hope Transportation Supervisor James Burian not only attended the eight-hour training program but also earned credentials as a certified defensive driving instructor.

“In 2014, Gift of Hope personnel drove 1.2 million miles,” he says. “Our No. 1 priority is to improve our safety on the road.”

As an added safety measure, Gift of Hope is implementing a “lights and sirens” policy to determine when to use flashing lights and sirens during the transport of a recovered organ.

“Whether we use lights and sirens will depend on the time of day and traffic conditions,” Burian says. “Transporting out-of-state transplant teams will automatically activate the lights and sirens policy.”

What’s more, Gift of Hope transport vehicles will soon be equipped with “emitters” that pre-empt the normal operation of traffic lights, giving emergency vehicles the right of way.

And because safe driving is a concern throughout the organization, Gift of Hope is opening up the defensive driving course to other select personnel. Staff members will have to take the training on their own time, but Gift of Hope is footing the bill.

“If it helps avoid just one accident and save just one life, either the life of a Gift of Hope staff member or the life of a waiting transplant recipient, it’s well worth it,” Cmunt says. “Saving lives is the business we’re in.”

Future Safety Plans
Other safety topics Gift of Hope will focus on in the coming months include back safety, office ergonomics, handling “sharps” in the operating room and proper lifting techniques.

“For an organization to achieve optimal safety, everyone must believe in its importance and be held accountable for supporting it,” Cmunt says. “With our new Safety Initiative in place, Gift of Hope is truly leading the charge.”
The donor authorization rate among Chicago-area Hispanics increased a record 17 percent in 2014 as a result of Gift of Hope’s aggressive outreach efforts aimed at educating Hispanics about donation and the importance of being a registered donor.

“We have made a commitment to be a part of everything good for the Latino community by planning and conducting educational events and programs and other donation awareness-raising outreach initiatives designed to increase residents’ understanding of organ and tissue donation while being sensitive to their cultural needs,” says Raiza Mendoza, Gift of Hope’s Manager of Hispanic Affairs.

To continue down that positive path, Gift of Hope has launched a new outreach campaign — United for Hope — a three-part series of roundtables with representatives from Hispanic not-for-profit organizations, legislators and city officials. The initiative seeks to educate, engage and inspire leaders from different sectors to become long-term supporters of organ and tissue donation and help to make donation a positive and mainstream topic of conversation throughout Gift of Hope’s Illinois and northwest Indiana service area.

“United for Hope seeks to empower our community leaders to learn and talk about organ and tissue donation with their organization members, constituents, peers, family and friends,” Mendoza says. “There is tremendous strength in numbers, and through helping and working with each other we can achieve positive and lasting results.”

The first roundtable took place in May and included several Chicago-area not-for-profit organizations such as East Village Youth Program, United Neighborhood Organization, City Colleges of Chicago, Pilsen Neighbors, Mujeres Latinas en Acción and Metropolitan Family Services. “Valuable insights were shared and gained about barriers and opportunities surrounding organ donation as it relates to first- or second-hand experiences, ideas and perceptions,” Mendoza says.

The two remaining roundtables will take place during National Minority Donor Awareness week in August and Hispanic Heritage Month, which runs September 15 to October 15. These upcoming discussions will involve the participation of top Chicago city officials and Illinois state legislators, according to Mendoza.

United for Hope will culminate with a final event in November, bringing all of Gift of Hope’s multicultural task forces together to celebrate their year-round efforts to save lives through organ and tissue donation. At this event, Gift of Hope will recognize the individuals and organizations that participated in United for Hope and other events and programs targeting Hispanics in 2015.

Each April, Gift of Hope unites with donor hospital partners, businesses and communities throughout Illinois and northwest Indiana to observe and celebrate National Donate Life Month. The theme for Gift of Hope’s 2015 activities was Circle of Hope, recognizing the interconnectedness of donors, donor families, transplant recipients and people waiting for lifesaving organ transplants and life-enhancing tissue transplants.

Gift of Hope’s promotional materials encouraged people to learn about donation’s Circle of Hope by viewing online videos that tell the stories of four people who are part of this sacred circle — Kyle Zuleg, a donor; Cindy McKinnon, a donor mother; Kelvin Martin, a transplant recipient; and Yessenia Wallace, a transplant waitlist candidate. Those videos can still be viewed at GiftofHope.org/April.

Throughout the month, Gift of Hope and other donation advocates conducted a variety of special events and other community outreach activities to educate the public about organ and tissue donation, raise awareness of Gift of Hope and the contributions it makes to saving and enhancing people’s lives, and encourage people to register as donors to address the ever-widening gap between the number of organs available for transplantation and people waiting for lifesaving transplants.

All in all, Gift of Hope and its donation partners conducted more than 100 community outreach programs during the month to spread the word about organ and tissue donation.
With more than 40,000 African-Americans currently on the national transplant waiting list, including nearly 5,000 in Illinois, the need for African-American donors has never been greater. This group has an increased risk for high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease — all of which can lead to organ failure and the need for organ transplants.

To address the ever-growing shortage of minority donors, during National Donate Life Month in April Gift of Hope launched a year-long public education and community outreach campaign targeting African-Americans in Chicago’s south suburbs. The goal of the three-tiered campaign is to turn the tragedy of a loss of life into a triumph of life renewed.

To achieve this goal, Gift of Hope has enlisted the support of mayors, pastors and barber and beauty shop owners from various south suburban towns and cities, along with hospital partners Ingalls Memorial Hospital in Harvey, Ill., and Advocate South Suburban Hospital in Hazel Crest, Ill.

The individual community outreach programs — Mayors for Hope, Churches for Hope and Beauty and Barber Shops for Hope — ran parallel during April and will continue throughout 2015. “This community-based initiative strives to make the subject of organ and tissue donation an everyday topic of conversation in African-American communities while creating awareness about the importance of staying healthy and being transplant-ready to people in these communities and teaching them how to do so,” says Marion Shuck, Manager of Community Affairs at Gift of Hope.

As part of their commitment to Mayors for Hope, all of the 15 south suburban mayors participating in the program have agreed to share their resources, contacts and programs to help promote organ and tissue donation in their communities. For example, Harvey Mayor Eric Kellogg, a long-time supporter of Gift of Hope, was personally touched by organ donation and transplantation when his niece, Monica Fox, was added to the kidney transplant waiting list in Illinois. (See Monica’s story on p. 12.) He is eager to spread and encourage the conversation about donation among the 25,000 residents of his community.

The Churches for Hope program is supported by more than 75 religious and faith leaders who are making it possible for Gift of Hope to distribute educational material on organ and tissue donation at each participating church throughout the year. More than 150 Gift of Hope Advocates for Hope volunteers and 70 volunteers from the South Suburban Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, are also spreading the word about the importance of donation and of sharing the decision to be donors with family members.

The third and equally important component of this campaign, Beauty and Barber Shops for Hope, is targeting 15 business owners who have graciously partnered with Gift of Hope to educate their patrons about preventive health measures and the critical need for minorities to spark and continue the conversation about organ and tissue donation within their communities.

“Throughout 2015, Mayors, Churches and Beauty and Barber Shops for Hope will continue to provide information and outreach to more than 50 communities, 300 churches and 100 barber and beauty shops,” Shuck says. “Our goal is to make the message about the lifesaving benefits of organ and tissue donation resonate in the hearts and minds of thousands of Illinois and northwest Indiana residents, particularly those in African-American communities.”
A Celebration of Life

Gift of Hope Unites Donor and Recipient Families in Memorable Gathering

Celia Fabre, Tarik Causay and Karen Emerich (l-r) were the recipients of Jermaine Cullum Jr.’s gifts of life.
It was a reunion of sorts for four families who gathered at Gift of Hope headquarters in Itasca, Ill., in mid-May. Although they’d never before met and are unrelated by blood, the families share a special bond that transcends ethnicity, religion, economic status and geography — created by the life-giving legacy of 16-year-old Jermaine Cullum Jr. of Chicago.

Jermaine, a Christ the King Jesuit Prep School sophomore, who collapsed and died while playing in a basketball tournament at Riverside-Brookfield High School in May 2014, gave life to three people as an organ donor: 39-year-old Taik Causay of Chicago; 48-year-old Celia Fabre of Chicago; and 57-year-old Karen Emerich of New Carlisle, Ind. With their loved ones by their sides, the three met Jermaine’s parents, Tarcia Patton and Jermaine Cullum Sr., for the first time in an emotional, uplifting gathering at Gift of Hope.

“He is my family now,” Tarcia says. “I couldn’t wait to meet them. They’re part of my son, so now they’re part of me.”

A Family Reunion
A year after Jermaine’s passing and Tarcia’s courageous decision, a crowd assembled at Gift of Hope to learn more about the people whose lives he saved.

“He was a wonderful kid from the time he was little. He was always inspired to do more.”
- Jermaine Cullum Sr.

Jermaine’s Story
Besides his family and friends, Jermaine’s true love was basketball. A star on and off the court, he played the game with passion, determination and joy. His future definitely looked bright.

Despite the glory he achieved in his short career, Jermaine remained humble until the end. “He always made sure he went to church before basketball practice,” Tarcia recalls with a smile, describing her first-born child as “spiritual beyond his years.”

“He was a wonderful kid from the time he was little,” Jermaine Sr. adds. “He was always inspired to do more.” A top-notch student, a gifted athlete and a loving son, Jermaine was, in the end, a true hero.

Tarcia arrived at the hospital hopeful, but doctors told her that Jermaine had no brain activity and was unable to breathe on his own. She stayed by her son’s side until the end, and then made a courageous decision that would forever change the lives of four families.

Although Jermaine was too young to register as a donor before his untimely death, his parents knew that was his wish. Long before he died, Jermaine had told his family he wanted to register as a donor when he was old enough. He never reached that age. But in their time of loss, Jermaine’s parents gave others something to live for when Tarcia authorized donation of Jermaine’s organs.

“He inspired me to become an organ donor too,” Jermaine Sr. adds. “He always put himself second and everyone else first.”

Last July, Gift of Hope’s African-American Task Force honored Jermaine’s parents for making the ultimate gift and helping to raise awareness of organ and tissue donation in the African-American community. They presented them with Gift of Hope’s inaugural Tragedy to Triumph Award.

“Nationally, a third of those on organ transplant waiting lists are African-American, yet this population accounts for only 14 percent of donors,” says Jack Lynch, Director of Community Affairs at Gift of Hope. “Stories like Jermaine’s help to inform, inspire and encourage others to overcome their reservations and register as donors.”

Connections - A Celebration of Life

Karen Emerich, a seventh-grade teacher, received Jermaine’s lungs during a double-lung transplant performed by transplant surgeon Daniel Dilling, MD, at Loyola University Medical Center. For five years, she had battled pulmonary fibrosis, a condition that scars the lungs and makes breathing difficult. She toted her oxygen tank faithfully back and forth to school.
each day as she waited for the call that would bring the gift of life to her.

“Before the transplant, I didn’t venture out much,” the wife, mother of four and grandmother of seven admits.

But that all changed when she received a second chance at life. Her “to-do” list now is long and full of adventure, and she relishes the opportunity to cross off each item as she goes, including taking her very first roller coaster ride in April. “I want to make sure I live a fulfilling life in honor of my donor,” she adds.

Tarak Causay shares Karen’s sentiments. The grateful father of three received Jermaine’s left kidney and pancreas in a procedure performed by Dolamu Olaitan, MD, a kidney/pancreas transplant surgeon at Chicago’s Rush University Medical Center.

“I didn’t know Jermaine, but he’s always with me,” Tarik says, wiping away tears.

Tarak Causay was diagnosed with diabetes at 16, endured kidney dialysis for several years and spent five years on the waiting list before learning organs had been located. He keeps Jermaine’s obituary near his bed as a constant reminder of the person who gave him a second chance at life. “He gave me the perfect gift,” he says.

Celia Fabre received Jermaine’s right kidney and liver. At three years old, she was diagnosed with a rare genetic disease called primary hyperoxaluria, the same disease that claimed the life of her brother 17 years ago. After spending three-and-a-half years on the waiting list, Celia got the call she had been waiting for. Her transplant procedure was performed at Loyola by transplant surgeon Amy Lu, MD.

“I am so thankful to Jermaine and his family,” the wife and mother of two daughters says. “He gave me life, and he gave me hope when I didn’t think I had any other chances. He gave me a second chance with my family. I lost a brother to this same disease, and I think he’s here with us today, too. My family thanks you, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

“I was ecstatic to meet them, knowing that he lives on in each of them,” Tarcia says. “I was hugging them and didn’t want to let them go. We have a bigger family now.”

After the emotional meeting, several Chicago television news channels carried Jermaine’s story of hope and life on their evening broadcasts.
New Advisory Group Formed to Enhance Donation Process

As part of its ongoing efforts to improve organ and tissue donation outcomes in Illinois and northwest Indiana, Gift of Hope conducted an extensive survey of its hospital partners in 2014, focusing on critical care physicians. In addition, the organization held a number of internal, cross-functional team meetings with its staff members who interact with the 180 hospitals Gift of Hope works with in its service area.

The results of those actions? “Among other things, we discovered that we have a lot more to learn,” says Kevin Cmunt, President/CEO of Gift of Hope. “The complex nature of working with physicians, clinicians, families and other stakeholders during the organ donation process led us to the conclusion that we need more input from the most critical members of the patient care team — attending physicians.”

With that in mind, Gift of Hope has established a Critical Care Advisory Group (CCAG) to guide the organization on what it can do better to enhance the work it does before, during and after donation cases. The group consists of 14 critical care physicians who will meet quarterly to guide Gift of Hope on how it can work better with donor hospitals as the two sides work collaboratively to make donation happen.

The CCAG held its initial meeting in May and identified several process improvement opportunities and topics to focus on to bring more organs and tissue to people in need. They include brain death education, donor management and physician/Gift of Hope communication. High on the CCAG’s list is creating and conducting a brain-death simulation lab workshop to give stakeholders in the donation process hands-on experience in a controlled, no-risk environment.

Message of the Month Aims to Boost Donation Numbers

Gift of Hope has instituted a Message of the Month initiative targeting hospital professionals to inform and educate them about various aspects of donation and the important role they play in helping to make donation happen. Throughout the year, Gift of Hope is producing and distributing monthly graphical messages on one of four topics — organ donation, tissue donation, donation behavior and donation statistics — to key contacts at the 180 hospitals Gift of Hope works with in its service area. Each topic will be addressed three times during the year.

So far in 2015, Gift of Hope’s Message of the Month tools have reminded hospital professionals about the important role they played in Gift of Hope’s record-breaking 2014, informed them about bone donation and the many benefits that bone transplants offer to people in need of life-enhancing — and sometimes lifesaving — bone transplants, and reminded hospital staff about the “triggers” that should prompt a donor referral to Gift of Hope.

Gift of Hope’s Donation Coordinators — the organization’s liaisons between Gift of Hope and its partnering hospitals — are distributing the Message of the Month tools to their hospital contacts to educate hospital stakeholders about donation and strengthen their ties to these people who play a critical role in producing successful donation outcomes. Gift of Hope’s ultimate goal with the initiative is to collectively work with hospital professionals to boost donor authorization rates in 2015 and bring more lifesaving organs and healing tissue to people in need.
Of the 5,200 people currently waiting for an organ transplant in Illinois, more than 4,200 of them — about 80 percent — need a lifesaving kidney transplant. Monica Fox is among them. Monica, a Flossmoor, Ill., resident and single mother of a daughter who recently earned a degree in mass media communications from the University of Missouri, is experiencing the challenges that so many people on the transplant waiting list must confront as they wait for the call that can save their lives.

Connections sat down with Monica to talk about her situation and asked her to share the challenges she currently faces as a waitlist candidate. Here is a transcript of her responses, which have been edited for clarity:

Connections: When did you find out you needed a kidney transplant, and what condition or conditions contributed to you being in this situation?
Monica: I was obese for many years and was diagnosed with high blood pressure in May 2013. My physical condition and health status caused progressive damage to my kidneys until I reached a point where one kidney fell below the minimum level of function needed to make me eligible for the transplant waiting list.

Connections: How long have you been on the waiting list, and where are you currently listed?
Monica: I started kidney dialysis in November 2013, and I went on the transplant waiting list in June 2014. I am currently listed at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

Connections: What impact has your health situation had on your personal and family life?
Monica: It has had a profound impact on my family because I am currently not working due to my illness. My energy level is inconsistent, and I have so many doctor appointments that it makes it difficult to impossible to work full time.

Connections: What single thing do you miss doing the most in your life right now because of your health situation?
Monica: I miss the financial flexibility created by having full-time pay and the freedom to travel without having to schedule dialysis treatments.

Connections: How are you managing the financial impact of your health situation? Do you have adequate health insurance?
Monica: Managing finances is an ongoing challenge for me given my current health status. As I mentioned, I cannot work full time, so I am currently struggling to find affordable supplemental coverage to offset the Medicare 20 percent copay.

Connections: You’ve been on the waiting list for a year now. Have you experienced any “false alarms” during that period, notifications that a donor kidney was available to you only to end up not receiving it?
Monica: Not yet. I pray that when I get call it will be the real deal.

Connections: You seem to have a strong support network as you confront the many challenges you’re facing as a waitlist candidate. Who has been particularly supportive to you?
Monica: I am so grateful to Gift of Hope, in particular (Director of Community Affairs) Jack Lynch, (Manager of Community Affairs) Marion Shuck and (President/CEO) Kevin Cmunt for all of the opportunities they have given me to volunteer for Gift of Hope. My association with this organization and the ability to shed light on this very important issue of organ and tissue donation is certainly making my wait a little bit easier.

I am also deeply grateful to The Links, Incorporated, which I am a member of. I was introduced to Gift of Hope through this organization. I have participated in advocating for organ and tissue donation nationally with The Links, Incorporated, during National Donor Sabbath held each November, and now my local chapter has an ongoing relationship with Gift of Hope. We participate in every way we can to help Gift of Hope carry out its mission of saving and enhancing lives through organ and tissue donation.

Connections: What message do you have for others currently waiting for lifesaving organ transplants?
Monica: Even though you’re facing many challenges in your life, be encouraged that good things will happen. And if you’re waiting for a kidney transplant like I am, don’t miss your dialysis treatments and be sure to follow the nutritional advice of the dietitian.

Connections: What message do you have for others in the general public about addressing the shortage of transplantable organs in Illinois?
Monica: We need to have more conversations in our homes with our families about being registered organ and tissue donors so that when it comes time to make that difficult decision everyone is aware of each other’s wishes. If you make the decision to donate, be sure to share that decision with your family members and friends.
Gift of Hope works in partnership with 180 hospitals and nine transplant centers to meet the ever-growing demand for donor organs and fulfill the organization’s vision — that every opportunity for organ and tissue donation is successful. Here’s a look at key donation performance metrics for Illinois and northwest Indiana hospitals and the contributions these hospitals are making to give hope and life to others.

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<td>Centegra Hospital: McHenry</td>
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<td>Centegra Hospital: Woodstock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Franciscan St. Margaret Health: Dyer</td>
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<td>Franciscan St. Margaret Health: Hammond</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holy Cross Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ingalls Memorial Hospital</td>
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<td>John H. Stroger Jr. Hospital of Cook County</td>
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<td>Kishwaukee Community Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>Little Company of Mary Hospital &amp; Health Care</td>
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<td>Methodist Hospital: Northlake</td>
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<td>Methodist Hospital: Southlake</td>
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<td>Mount Sinai Hospital Medical Center</td>
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</table>

*Hospitals with at least one organ donor through 4/30/15. Note: Data subject to change due to Gift of Hope’s quality assurance process.
## Organ Donors
Donors from whom one or more organs were recovered for the purpose of transplantation. This includes both donation after brain death, or DBD, donors and donation after circulatory death, or DCD, donors.

## Donation Authorization Rate
The rate at which authorization for donation is obtained, expressed as a percentage.

## Donation Conversion Rate
The rate at which potential donors are converted to actual donors, expressed as a percentage.

## Timely Notification Rate
The rate at which hospitals contact Gift of Hope after a death or within one hour after an individual meets the criteria for imminent death and before the withdrawal of life-sustaining therapies, expressed as a percentage.
STATE OF DONATION

**Connections**

**State of Donation**

**Hospital Performance Metrics**

**STATE OF DONATION**

The number of people waiting for heart, liver, kidney, lung, pancreas or small bowel transplants as of May 31, 2015.

- **5,209*** in Illinois
- **123,005*** in U.S.
- **1,432*** in Indiana

**Illinois Organ & Tissue Donor Registry**

- **5,791,218**
  - As of May 31, 2015

**Organ Donors**

- **2015**: 165
- **2014**: 127
- **% Change**: 29.92%

**Organs Transplanted**

- **2015**: 450
- **2014**: 375
- **% Change**: 20.00%

**Organs Per Donor**

- **2015**: 272
- **2014**: 2.96
- **% Change**: -7.64%

**Tissue Donors**

- **2015**: 749
- **2014**: 788
- **% Change**: -4.95%

**Bone Donors **

- **2015**: 587
- **2014**: 545
- **% Change**: 7.71%

**Heart Valves Recovered **

- **2015**: 65
- **2014**: 84
- **% Change**: -22.62%

**Skin Donors **

- **2015**: 344
- **2014**: 603
- **% Change**: -42.95%

---

* Through May 31
** Subset of Tissue Donors

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**Organ Donors**

- **2015**: 165
- **2014**: 127
- **% Change**: 29.92%

**Organs Transplanted**

- **2015**: 450
- **2014**: 375
- **% Change**: 20.00%

**Organs Per Donor**

- **2015**: 272
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**Tissue Donors**

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**Skin Donors **

- **2015**: 344
- **2014**: 603
- **% Change**: -42.95%

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* Based on data from the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network

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**Illinois Organ & Tissue Donor Registry**

- **5,791,218**
  - As of May 31, 2015

**57%**

- Of adults (18 or older) in Illinois are registered as organ and tissue donors.

**300**

- In 2014, more than 300 people registered for transplants in Illinois died while waiting.

**18**

- An average of 18 people die each day while waiting for a transplant.

**10**

- Every 10 minutes, a new person is added to the national transplant waiting list.

**25**

- One donor can save or enhance the lives of more than 25 people.

---

**Make a Difference!**

**REGISTER TO BE AN ORGAN AND TISSUE DONOR**

GiftofHope.org
Calendar of Events

July 11
A Summer Filled with Hope Charity Fashion Event
National Museum of Mexican Art
Chicago

August 1 – 7
National Minority Donor Awareness Week

September 26
Advocates Summit: Tools for Telling the Donation Story
Springfield, Ill.

October 4
A Celebration of Hope and Life: Hispanic Donor Family Tribute
National Museum of Mexican Art
Chicago

October 9
Lifesaving Partner Awards Event
Hyatt Lodge at McDonald’s Campus
Oak Brook, Ill.

October 24
A Celebration of Hope: Donor Family Tribute
Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network
Itasca, Ill.

For more information on these and other events, visit GiftofHope.org.