INFANT LIVER RECIPIENTS CELEBRATE
25 + Years Of Life
REFLECTING ON THE PAST
LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Last year the California Transplant Donor Network celebrated our 26th anniversary. Even as we recognized our accomplishments we also paused to take stock of the work that we do on a daily basis, and reflect on how we can do even better.

Our passionate and caring staff puts their all into making the miracle of life come true for many who wait. But that would be next to impossible without the partnerships that allow us to pursue our mission to save and improve lives through organ, eye and tissue donation.

Thank you to the hospital staff and physicians, county coroners, medical examiners and funeral home directors who work with us and go out of their way to make donation possible. They provide compassionate care for families as they deal with their loss.

I also want to thank the nearly 12 million people in California and Nevada who have said “Yes!” to saving lives by registering as organ and tissue donors. You offer hope to those who wait.

But my deepest gratitude is to the generous donors and their families. Even through the veil of sadness, they see the opportunity for some good to come from their loss. Their loved ones who gave the Gift of Life are the true heroes – we strive to ensure their legacy is not forgotten.

As we look ahead, we can see there is much to be done. The waiting list for organ transplants grows longer and adds even more urgency to our work. To make sure we make the most of every opportunity to save lives, we plan new ways to strengthen the partnerships with those who help us in saving lives.

“Renown is known for doing what’s best for patients and that includes the compassionate care provided to the families whose loved ones have become organ and tissue donors,” said Siljestrom.

Siljestrom used the opportunity to meet with Nevada hospital executives to increase awareness of the growing need for organs throughout the country. There are about 600 people in Nevada who are waiting for organ transplants.

CTDN is the federally-designated organ procurement organization for Washoe and Carson City counties and along with Sierra Donor Services coordinates tissue donation in Northern Nevada.

RENO’S RENOWN MEDICAL CENTER RECOGNIZED

In an early September meeting of the Nevada State Hospital Association, CTDN CEO Cindy Siljestrom personally recognized Renown Regional Medical Center, whose critical care team and administration continue support of donor patients, their families and those who are on waiting lists to receive the Gift of Life.

In 2013, Renown cared for 23 donors leading to 71 transplanted organs.

Renown was previously recognized for its best practices pediatric donation process and received a national award for their support of donation in 2012.

CTDN staff joined Renown staff with the award the regional center received for its support of donation. From left are: Amy McComba, RN-Director of Nursing Critical Care and Telemetry; Angie Tammer, RN; Alii Gunawan, RN; Damar Foley, RN; Frances Meyer, RN; Maria Miranda, RN; Kim Simpson, RN; Derek Drake, RN-Manager of Nursing Services; Jennifer Gilbert, RN; Malia Prado Jr., CCT; Matt Tschill, RN; and CTDN staff. John Lilley, Manager of Clinical Services and Donation Program Consultant Bonnie Turner.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AWARDS
GIVEN TO HOSPITALS

Silver Award Winners
• California Pacific Medical Center, San Francisco
• Eden Medical Center, Castro Valley

Bronze Award Winners
• John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek
• Kaiser Medical Center, Vacaville
• Lodi Memorial Hospital, Lodi
• Memorial Medical Center, Modesto
• San Francisco General Hospital, San Francisco
• San Joaquin General Hospital, French Camp
• St. Joseph’s Medical Center, Stockton
• VA Palo Alto Health Care System, Palo Alto

Ten Northern California hospitals were honored by the federal government for their work to inform the public about the great need for more organ, eye and tissue donors, and for encouraging people to register as donors.

Assistant Secretary for Health and Human Services Howard K. Koh, MD, recognized the hospitals last June at the national convention of the Association for Organ Procurement Organizations meeting in Baltimore, MD.

More than 900 hospitals across the U.S. staged events and provided information to the public and their staff about the need to register.
HEROES in hospitals

... Thank You!

Dr. Chris Brown
California Pacific Medical Center

Dr. Brown is not only an outstanding intensivist, but also a dedicated and compassionate family advocate. He went above and beyond with two daughters struggling with the sudden brain death of their father. The patient’s daughters later told the CTDN that they felt blessed for the care their father had received from Dr. Brown, and hopeful about the lifesaving gift he had given.

Dr. Kelsey Gray
Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System

Dr. Gray was the declaring physician in two recent Donation after Circulatory Death (DCD) cases. Dr. Gray lead the withdrawal process for both of these patients, even when it meant leaving a family Memorial Day BBQ she was hosting. Thank you, Dr. Gray, for supporting these families’ desires to help others through donation.

Dr. Amit Gohil
Santa Clara Valley Medical Center

Dr. Gohil recently demonstrated tenacity and commitment to ensure that the family of his patient could speak with CTDN about organ and tissue donation. Despite the obstacles presented by the situation, because of Dr. Gohil, the patient’s family chose to donate their loved one’s organs and tissues. The patient saved lives by donating the liver, corneas, and skin.

Judy Bryant
St. Louise Regional Hospital

Judy Bryant is involved with the donation process and plays an important part in ensuring that timely referrals and excellent donor patient care are top of mind. Effective communication and support from all staff involved on a recent case facilitated the development of a collaborative plan that helped a registered organ donor save lives.

Judy Bryant attended the CTDN Education Forum in April, and has participated in individual meetings to gain a better understanding of the organ donation process and best practices. She was extremely helpful and a great resource for CTDN’s coordinators, working together to provide a potential donor patient’s family with care and support.

Sarah Nesbit
Marin General Hospital

Recently, Sarah provided superior care to a potential organ donor. Drawing on her experience in cardiac care, Sarah thought outside the box when caring for this patient and was able to assist the hospital team in normalizing the patient’s vitals.

Dr. John Millar
Vacaville Kaiser Hospital

Dr. Millar worked directly with the coroner’s pathologist to help answer questions and resolve any issues. Dr. Millar’s assistance led to the coroner’s office releasing the patient to become a donor. He also facilitated essential procedures throughout the case. The patient’s liver, kidneys, and tissues were transplanted.

Kacie Boyce
Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula

Kacie Boyce attended the CTDN Education Forum in April, and has participated in individual meetings to gain a better understanding of the organ donation process and best practices. She was extremely helpful and a great resource for CTDN’s coordinators, working together to provide a potential donor patient’s family with care and support.
While work in the trauma center is always about saving the life of the patient, Dr. Townsend has seen families draw comfort from knowing a loved one’s legacy is that they have saved and improved lives through organ and tissue donation.

**Doctor’s Corner**

**Is Donation after Circulatory Death an option for donors over 60-years-old?**

Sometimes, Donation after Circulatory Death donors undergo a period of “warm ischemia” after life support is withdrawn and before they reach circulatory death. During this time, low blood pressure and hypoxemia damages their organs. Younger organs can recover from this level of injury, while older organs typically cannot, and do not do well as allografts. Occasionally, a very healthy person in their early 60s will be considered as a DCD donor.

**Does positive toxicology rule a patient out for organ donation?**

Drug use does not prohibit someone from becoming a donor. Every organ is evaluated for function and suitability, and donors undergo testing for communicable diseases including hepatitis B and C, and HIV. With this testing, an infection contracted as few as five days before death can be detected. High risk behavior by a donor such as recent IV drug abuse is disclosed to potential recipients and their doctors so that they can make an informed decision about the risk of accepting the organ.

**Why are brain dead patients made a full code instead of a DNR? Is it ethical, or is there harm in maintaining a heartbeat in a declared dead patient to preserve the option of donation?**

This does not prolong the life of a brain dead person, because brain death is death. Once a patient dies, there is no risk or harm to the patient by “coding” the body for the purposes of donation. In fact, this practice does provide a potential benefit to the recipients of the organs, and to the donor family from the act of giving. When when family members are informed, CTDN explains that their loved one will be a full code, and what this means in terms of preserving the opportunity for donation.

**For brain dead patients, why wait for the patient to be declared brain dead before talking to the family about donation?**

Studies have shown that when families still have hope for their loved one, talking with them about organ and tissue donation will result in declines, as well as poor satisfaction with the process. When families understand that their loved one has died many will typically begin to ask “what’s next.” It’s then that the discussion of end of life options including organ and tissue donation can take place.

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Dr. Nikole Neidlinger

Dr. Neidlinger is Medical Director of the California Transplant Donor Network and a transplant surgeon at the California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco. A native of Georgia, Dr. Neidlinger completed a transplant surgery fellowship at the University of Wisconsin as a clinical assistant professor of surgery. As part of her fellowship, Dr. Neidlinger dedicated an additional year to the University of Wisconsin’s organ procurement organization where she was able to increase the number of organs transplanted per donor and collaborated with area coroners.

**RICARD TOWNSEND, M.D.**

His passion includes supporting donation

Dr. Ricard Townsend has been practicing for 33 years and is part of Community Regional Medical Center’s Trauma Faculty in Fresno. He specializes in trauma, critical care, and general surgery at the Central Valley’s only level one trauma center.

While his priority is always the life of his patients, Dr. Townsend also contributes his skills to help save lives through organ donation. In 2013, Community Regional Medical Center cared for 23 donors leading to 78 organs available to save lives through donation.

Dr. Townsend shares his passion for donation with his team and keeps them focused on the lifesaving possibilities that can happen through the Gift of Life. “When saving a patient’s life becomes impossible, despite medical intervention and best efforts, it’s important for our team to realize the situation continues to be just as important, as this patient can potentially save the four to eight lives through organ donation and improve others through tissue donation.” He added in a busy trauma center, “The other challenge is prioritizing between patient A requiring trauma intervention while patient B is requiring the same care to ensure donation remains an option.”
In July, as the San Francisco Giants were making their championship season run, two women came to AT&T Park to celebrate as well—they were marking more than 25 years of life they received thanks to organ donors. Jill Nolen and Kelly Olmo donned official Giants gear to that day become designated “ball dudes” for the San Francisco Giants’ Donate Life Game. It’s the 17th year the Giants have partnered with California Transplant Donor Network for the game.

Twenty-five years ago, just as the Giants were in the midst of another World Series season, the two girls were infants suffering from liver disease with just a few days to live. Gathered at the hospital, Jill and Kelly’s parents prayed for lifesaving transplants. At the time, liver transplants for infants and the very young were risky. Thanks to the generous and selfless gift of two donors, Jill and Kelly were given a second chance at life. Both received liver transplants at California Pacific Medical Center in 1989. Jill faced another major challenge when her first transplant failed just five months later. But once again she was fortunate to receive a donated liver and a third chance at life.

For the Giants and the Bay Area, 1989 was also the year the area endured the 6.9 Loma Prieto, Earthquake, which caused a 10-day delay in the Giants’ battle with crosstown rivals, the Oakland A’s. Unlike this year, the Giants would eventually lose the World Series. Since then, as Jill and Kelly have grown up, the need for donors has increased. In 1989, 17,917 were on the list for organ transplants nationally. Today nearly 124,000 people are waiting.

Kelly, who recently got engaged, says, “I want people to know that donation saved my life, and it can save many people’s lives.”

Jill continues to pursue a passion for gymnastics and tumbling as well as playing softball. She participated as a Team NorCal member in the 2014 Transplant Games held last summer in Houston, TX, and brought back 12 medals. Jill says, “I try to live my borrowed life to the fullest on a day-to-day basis.”
Joy Love Williams’ passion for music led her to develop a side career as a wedding and gospel singer. That was until she began to have difficulty breathing. Her health deteriorated suddenly and she suffered re-occurring bouts with pneumonia. In November 2011 she was told her lungs were being damaged by a disease for which there is no cure – her only hope was to receive a lung transplant.

At first she managed her condition with medications but they only slowed the process down. She then required oxygen and lived in virtual isolation to avoid exposure to potential sources of infection. Although weak and breathless, Joy remained unwavering in her faith, and held out hope that she would receive a double lung transplant and another chance to lift her voice in song. “I believe that my destiny is in my hands – God brings us causes based on purpose – this has helped me stay focused and hopeful,” Joy said.

Joy’s name was placed on the national transplant list in February, 2014. Soon afterwards, she became a California Transplant Donor Network volunteer and recorded a radio PSA in support of donation. She rallied to hold a fundraiser for her upcoming transplant and always kept a positive outlook while she waited for “the call” about new lungs.

Sadly, that call did not come. Joy passed away in the summer of 2014, just months after being added to the transplant waiting list. The acute shortage of donors claimed another life that came to an end before a match could be found.

Give hope to people like Joy who wait – register as an organ and tissue donor at donateLIFEcalifornia.org or donateLIFEnv.org, or at the DMV.

Our family moved to Northern California from New Jersey when our daughter, Melissa, was a teenager” recalls her mother Lorraine DeFalco, a trauma nurse at the Santa Clara Valley Medical Center.

Melissa thrived and grew up as an active and outgoing teenager. “After high school she got married and when her two children were born, Melissa devoted her life to raising them” Lorraine says.

Melissa Ditta was always the “class mom” ready to help and support the school. And for every sport her children participated in, Melissa was always there as a volunteer, manning a booth, or shooting pictures for end-of-the-year photo albums for the players.

Sadly, Melissa died from a brain aneurysm in May of 2012. But true to the way she had lived her life, Melissa had decided to register as an organ and tissue donor. Her selfless gifts included her corneas, tissues and five lifesaving organs.

To recognize that generosity, Melissa’s story was told on behalf of all donors with a floragraph (floral portrait) on the 2014 Donate Life Rose Parade float.

“Giving was what Melissa was all about,” affirms Lorraine. “It’s who she was. She makes me proud. She was an amazing human being.”

The level of support that California Transplant Donor Network provides for organ and tissue donor families seen by staff at hospitals is only part of the story. CTDN is committed to the ongoing excellent care and support of all donor families after organ, eye and tissue donation takes place.

Depending on their needs, families whose loved ones become donors remain in contact with CTDN’s Donor Family Advocates for a year after the donation by their loved one.

At their request, families receive a personalized memorial card recognizing their loved one’s donation for use at their funeral or memorial services. Within the first month, all donor families also receive a packet containing a letter explaining how their loved one saved and healed the lives of others, a Certificate of Gratitude, a book for grieving donor families, and a newsletter providing grief support tips and resource information.

Families also receive a phone call from our grief counselors who are available to provide support and outside referrals.

Three months after donation, families receive another call and a survey about CTDN’s services. Our grief counselors call and send recipient update letters at six months and one year post-donation.

CTDN facilitates correspondence between donor families and their recipients who send letters of gratitude. When appropriate, CTDN facilitates the meeting of donor families and recipients.

During the first year after their loved one’s gift, families are invited to a donor family gathering to honor and remember their loved ones. The program is a celebration of life, and families are presented with a Donate Life Medal.

Anytime, even years after the death, we are available to provide support and answer questions. We consider it an honor and a privilege to hold a sacred space for all donor families in response to their generosity and compassion.
Two teenagers who died after a house fire gave life to others through donation. But thanks to CTDN Transplant Coordinators for Nevada, they also added to the understanding of care for patients who are about to become donors.

Stephanie Welker and Drew Hill undertook a study of a case in which a 16-year-old male and his 12-year-old sister were brought to the hospital. Both had stopped breathing before being revived at the scene. As part of his care, the hospital team chilled the young man’s body, hoping to slow down his metabolism to minimize the damage done to his brain as the result of being deprived of oxygen.

His sister did not receive that treatment. Despite efforts on both patients by hospital staff, they were declared brain dead. Their family heroically chose to donate their organs.

Stable patient chemistry and vital signs are key to being able to successfully recover and then transplant organs.

Welker and Hill were interested in understanding the impact the two different treatments made in the recovery process and the success of the resulting transplants. They found the brother who received the cooling then rewarming treatment was more stable and his organs could be recovered sooner. They were also interested in the impact to the recipients of the organs.

“In both cases,” Stephanie said, “the recipients of the donors’ organs are all doing well. The different treatments each donor received had no impact on the success of the transplants. The fact both donors were young probably also had a lot to do with that.”
Most people don’t think of DMVs lifesaving organizations, yet CTDN’s partnership with the DMVs in California and Nevada does indeed save lives because they offer the opportunity to choose to say “Yes” to donation.

More than 11,590,000 residents in California have checked Yes! on their State ID or driver’s license application forms while at the DMV. Their name is then added to the confidential database and this simple action documents their wish to be an organ and tissue donor.

To illustrate how important this is, nearly 50% of all donors in California have made the personal choice to give the Gift of Life to others by registering at the DMV.

In Nevada, the Department of Motor Vehicles was founded in 1957 to administer motor vehicle laws and driver licensing duties, and the Nevada Donor Registry was established in 2005. Since then, more than more 864,000 residents have declared their wish to save lives by registering as organ and tissue donors.

Our partnership with both the California and Nevada DMV’s makes it easy for people to record their wish to save lives when they obtain and renew their driver licenses and ID cards by simply checking “Yes” on their registration forms.

Sandy Andrada, CTDN Community Education Manager works closely with Regional DMV managers throughout our service area. “CTDN appreciates the strong partnership we have had with the DMV since the California Donor Registry was established in 2006, and the Nevada Registry in 2005. The part they play directly leads to lives saved and enhanced in California, Nevada, and across the country” Sandy said.

CTDN works closely with many different funeral homes to ensure the wishes of the family or the individual to be an organ and tissue donor are accomplished without adding unnecessary stress to a grieving family.

EXCEPTIONAL ATTENTION TO EVERY CALL

How can an organization that promptly and efficiently handled more than 500,000 calls last year also treat each caller with compassion, respect and professionalism?

The answer for the California Transplant Donor Network was to establish the Operations Center to ensure there is always a direct connection between our organization, our hospital partners, potential donor families, coroner’s offices, medical examiners, and funeral homes.

Prior to 2012, referral calls from hospitals, coroners and medical examiners went to a third party vendor, and then routed back to CTDN staff, creating extra steps and adding time. Now, referral information is taken immediately by highly skilled and trained staff, significantly speeding up the process.

The operations center not only handles referrals. With staff working around the clock every day of the year, it also handles the placement of donated organs, and dispatches organ and tissue teams to hospitals and other recovery locations throughout our service area.

Passion for the cause is essential, as staff also hold conversations with donor families to obtain authorization for donation, offer support and answer questions. The real-time connections our Operations Center provides are vital to our lifesaving mission.
we value your FEEDBACK

Provide CTDN your feedback

ctdn.org/feedback

or by scanning the QR code