

BRIDGES

A Newsletter for Donor Families
Winter 2017



What Is BRIDGES?

The name of this newsletter derives from an acronym that reflects the services Finger Lakes Donor Recovery Network offers to our donor families: **B**uilding **R**elationships, **I**ntegrating **D**onation, **G**rief, **E**ncouragement and **S**upport.

National Donor Sabbath Update

Written by Jenna Heery, Family Services Coordinator

“My religion does not support organ donation.”

This myth remains one of the most commonly cited reasons why individuals and families decline the opportunity to become an organ, eye, or tissue donor. And yet, all major world religions share a positive view of organ donation. Every major religion in the world views organ donation as an act of charity or otherwise makes it clear that it is a decision to be left up to the individual or family. Nevertheless, these views are not often clear to members of faith-based communities and congregations.

This need for increased awareness is part of the reason Finger Lakes Donor Recovery Network encouraged faith leaders of all religious denominations to participate in National Donor Sabbath the weekend of November 11-13, 2016. The annual, nation-wide event is held two weekends before Thanksgiving with the purpose of building awareness for the need of organ donors and to help increase organ donation enrollment. Together through these efforts, the donation and faith communities can hopefully save more lives.

This year, representatives of Finger Lakes Donor Recovery Network offered resources for faith-based communities as they prepared for this event. Clergy were encouraged to dedicate a sermon to promoting the values of organ donation and to invite speakers, such as transplant recipients,

donor family members, or living donors, to attend services that weekend. Congregants were also encouraged to join the organ donor registry.

These efforts at raising awareness among faith communities do not have to end here, however. We encourage clergy and congregants to continue in this life-saving work throughout the year. If you are a member of a faith community and would like to help, here are three simple steps you can take:

1. Request your religious leader to devote a sermon or a service about organ donation and how religion encourages all of us to save lives. (Finger Lakes Donor Recovery Network can even help provide sermon ideas)

*National
Donor Sabbath*

2. Ask your religious leader whether you can invite a speaker to attend services with you and speak with your congregation. You can contact Finger Lakes Donor Recovery Network to arrange a speaker, and we can also provide you with free materials to hand out.

3. Join the New York State Donate Life Registry! Then, tell your loved ones that you have made the decision to give the gift of life, and encourage your relatives, friends and colleagues to do the same.

For more information and helpful links, visit the [National Donor Sabbath page on Finger Lakes Donor Recovery Network's website](#). Through these continued efforts, we hope that spirit of Donor Sabbath can continue throughout the year, and in turn, hopefully more lives can be saved through the generous Gift of Life.



200 Hearts. 200 Second Chances.

Last fall, Strong Memorial Hospital's Heart Failure and Transplantation program celebrated their 200th heart transplant. The 200th heart transplant occurred on August 24, 2016 - giving Stephen Waite, Jr., a 48 year old father, a second chance at life. "I feel like a new man today," said Waite. He and his wife, Christine, are "so grateful, because it's been a long and tough road getting here." Christine, a nurse, is grateful to the heart donor whose generosity

helped save her husband's life.

"I look at Stephen and know that he is well today because a stranger was kind enough to donate a heart," she said. "What was the best day for us was a terrible day for that person's family and we will think of them always."

Reaching this milestone was a very proud moment for all of the dedicated staff who are a part of the heart failure and transplant team. The University of Rochester Medicine Heart & Vascular department have more than 900 people dedicated to patient care and heart research for the

patients they care for. They recognize that every transplant provides a new beginning for their patients and their families. It's also an incredible achievement for the entire team of doctors, nurses and support staff.

It took 15 years for this milestone to occur. The first heart transplant at Strong Memorial Hospital took place February 7, 2001. Strong Memorial Hospital houses the only comprehensive heart failure and transplant center in upstate New York. Patients come from all over the state, as well as Pennsylvania, to seek treatment and transplants.

The recipients know, as well as the entire medical community, that without the generosity of donor families, like you, the lives of those inflicted with diseases that cause their organs to fail and threaten their lives wouldn't be possible, and the gratitude from the recipients, and their family is endless.



Stephen Waite, Jr. and his wife, Christine, celebrated their 25th anniversary Sept. 21 and see a bright future after he received a heart transplant. Photo Credit: URM

On October 22, the “200 Hearts. 200 Second Chances” event was held at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center, bringing together many of URM’s heart transplant recipients, donor family representatives and staff from Strong Memorial Hospital and Finger Lakes Donor Recovery Network. (Photo Credits: URM)



Transplant recipients each hold a sign showing what number heart transplant they received at Strong Memorial. Donor families can be seen holding green and blue balloons in honor of their loved ones who passed life on. Also included in the photo are medical teams from Strong and some Finger Lakes Donor Recovery Network staff.



Thank you to our wonderful donor family representatives. Pictured here: the Dunn, Baker and the Campbell families.



Donna Dunn's inspirational words about the gift of organ donation received a standing ovation. A picture of Donna's daughter, Mary, who gave the gift of life can be seen in the photo above.

Rob Kochik, Executive Director of Finger Lakes Donor Recovery Network, spoke about how second chances would not be possible without the generosity of donors and donor families.



2017 Donate Life Float ~ “Teammates in Life”

Whether or not you were able to tune in to watch the Rose Parade on January 2nd, here are some highlights of the Donate Life float.

The 2017 Donate Life float, Teammates in Life, reflected the parade’s theme, which was, “Echoes of Success,” by reminding us that no one succeeds alone. We all thrive by working together and pulling in the same direction. Donors save the lives of grateful recipients and help families heal, and that only happens when people sign up to be an organ donor, or their family makes that decision on their behalf. Through their generous foresight, many lives are saved throughout the United States every year.



This year, the float depicted a spectacular Polynesian catamaran, which was propelled by a team of 24 organ, eye and tissue transplant recipients rowing in unison with strength gained from their donations. The sails of the vessel featured 60 floral portraits (floragraphs) of donors interwoven with Polynesian designs and patterns.

Just as the donors’ gifts empower the lives of others, the sails helped to power the catamaran on its journey. Twelve living donors walked alongside the float carrying flowers in celebration of the life they have given to others and the quality of life they continue to enjoy themselves. The ocean waves showcased 1,000 white Akito roses, individually dedicated in memory of specific donors. Vibrant birds perched among the lush landscape of tropical flowers and palm trees while a pair of tikis, representing light and life, abundance and peace, peered out of the jungle. The float exuded life with colorful, exotic blooms grown in Hawaii especially for the occasion.

“The Rose Parade gives the organ, eye and tissue donation and transplantation community an opportunity to come together as a team to inspire millions of viewers to support their fellow Americans by registering as donors,” said Tom Mone, Chairman of the Donate Life float

committee and CEO of OneLegacy. “Millions of Rose Parade watchers made an emotional connection to the ideals of community and cooperation the float depicted. There was a clear symbolic association between the team effort needed to propel the catamaran and the selflessness of deceased donors and their families providing life-saving gifts to grateful recipients. Organ donation and transplantation is truly a team effort, and our 2017 float conveys that beautifully.”



“A Miracle for an Angel”

Written by Jeff Mancini, Family Services Coordinator



Fresh off the holiday season, the title of this article might make you think its about miracles and angels of the spiritual kind. In fact, this is a true story of a baseball legend and the miracle of the gift of donation that saved his life.

Most people don't know who Rod Carew is. The name might sound familiar as a neighbor or member of your church. But for those of us who were little boys in the mid-1970's and early 1980's, especially little boys who enjoyed

watching and playing baseball, we know exactly who Rod Carew is.

Rod Carew had a playing career spanning from 1967 to 1985, playing for the Minnesota twins and the California Angels. What makes Mr. Carew's story special is not that he was the 1967 Rookie of the Year, or the 1977 Most Valuable Player, or an 18 time All Star, or even that he was inducted into the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame (1991). All of these accomplishments would be special in and of themselves, but the miracle I am speaking of is that in December 2016, at the age of 71, Mr. Carew was the recipient of a kidney and heart transplant.

In September of 2015, Mr. Carew was out for a leisurely eighteen holes of golf. After his opening tee shot, he felt intense pain in his chest. Despite thinking he was a healthy person, Rod was having a massive heart attack. He was rushed to the hospital and a LVAD (Left Ventricular Assist Device) was implanted. Doctors diagnosed Rod with extreme heart failure, and the LVAD was needed because his heart was too weak to pump blood to the rest of his body. Rod was made aware that he would eventually need a new heart because the LVAD is considered a bridge to transplant.

On December 16, 2016, Rod Carew, underwent a thirteen hour procedure at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, CA to receive that most special of all Christmas gifts. With an increased survival rate of approximately twelve years, Rod's wife expressed sympathy and appreciation to the donor family. His wife stated, "Rod knows he's been given another chance at life, and we look forward to making the most of it."

Even at his advanced age, what made Rod a candidate for a heart transplant was that he was always physically fit. Rod started a campaign called, "Heart of 29." The number 29 was his jersey number. The campaign's mission is to raise funds for the American Heart Association. By

joining “Carew’s Crew,” you can donate to a good cause and get your heart score checked. Rod’s message to everyone is to get their hearts checked regularly.

As this Hall of Fame baseball legend can attest, organ donation is the greatest gift anyone can give and a miracle for someone to receive.

Up-Coming Events

February

4 – Ryan Converse 5th Annual Bowling Tournament
1 pm Pla Mor Lanes, Watertown NY
Contact Bill Baker @ (315) 921-4340

10 - Donate Life Night with the Amerks vs. Albany – game time 7:05 pm

April – The whole month is Donate Life Month! Check our [FLDRN Facebook Page](#) often for updates on Donate Life Month events.

7 - Superhero Night w/ Elmira Jackals @ First Arena
Apr 7 @ 7:05 pm

21 - Blue and Green Day – Wear your Donate Life Colors!

23 – Rochester River Run – Genesee Valley Park 10-Noon

DONOR FAMILY EMAIL ADDRESSES NEEDED!

We like emailing BRIDGES to you, our donor families. If you are reading this on the website and would like the newsletter emailed to you, kindly provide us with your first and last name, your email address, and tell us that you wish to be added to our distribution list. Please send your request to Judy Hess at: mailto:Judy_Hess@urmc.rochester.edu or call her at 585-272-4930.

Of course, we also invite you to keep up-to-date by visiting our website at www.donorrecovery.org for "[News and Events for Donor Families](#)."

FLDRN Donor Family Support Page on Facebook

Our Family Services team is pleased to offer donor family members the opportunity to join the “FLDRN Donor Family Support Page,” on Facebook. This is a Closed Group, meaning only members can post and see stories on the Page, providing increased privacy and security for all our families. We currently have 58 members on our Page, and it has been so rewarding and heartwarming to see the support that you have been giving each other. It is why this Page was created! Even though each of your experiences are different, there is a common bond among you: you are all donor families... and who best to support donor families, than donor families?

If you are a donor family member who has not been invited to join the FLDRN Donor Family Support Page on Facebook, just send us a quick note with your email address and we will send you an invitation once all of the privacy paperwork has been completed. Email [Judy Hess](#), [Jeff Mancini](#) or [Jenna Heery](#) or contact them by calling the Rochester office at (585) 272-4930.