MESSAGE FROM THE CEO
Susan Stuart, Center for Organ Recovery & Education CEO

As we gather with family and friends to celebrate the holidays, we should take advantage of the opportunity to help those who are waiting for the most precious of gifts. It’s easy to see how we can bring organ, tissue and cornea donation into our celebrations. Although we are thankful for the gifts of organ donors and their families throughout the year, the holiday season is a great time to honor them for their willingness to help others. CORE has participated in several initiatives this month to celebrate organ, tissue and cornea donation the best way we know how – by spreading the word about donation and encouraging people to make A Pledge for Life.

From now until June 2014, CORE will match the purchase of a Donate Life license plate with all proceeds going to Team Pittsburgh in the Transplant Games of America next summer. CORE will also match the cost of those who already have a Donate Life license plate. Each of the transplant recipients competing has their donor to thank for their life-saving gift, and we are also pleased to honor their memory. In November, we observed National Donor Sabbath, a nationwide event that seeks to educate faith-based communities about the need for organ, tissue and cornea donors, by partnering with West Virginia State University to bring Step Afrika! to campus. We welcomed the public to join us and provided an opportunity for attendees who were not already registered donors to make A Pledge for Life and register.

At CORE, we aim to illuminate the process, dignity and importance of organ, tissue and cornea donation. As you spend time with loved ones this year, we urge you to do the same. We ask you to share your stories and memories with your family and friends. Tell them about all the wonderful things we’re doing at CORE in hope that you will inspire others to make A Pledge for Life.

You are Invited to the Heart Transplant Support Group Meeting!

Saturday, January 4, 2014
Panera Bread
3401 Blvd of Allies - Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(Oakland area, across from UPMC Magee Hospital on the corner of Halket St and Blvd of Allies)

The meetings are open discussion—bring your personal victories to share, your concerns, and your questions. If you wish to attend please contact Tom Meshanko at t.meshanko@verizon.net.

Join the Heart Transplant Support Group on Facebook.
To join, please contact Tom Meshanko.

The Heart Transplant Support Group’s goal is to provide support to Pre-Transplant and Post-Transplant individuals in the physical and emotional areas through discussion—the information shared is personal and should be kept private within the support group.
**STATISTICS**

- National Waiting List: 120,971
- CORE Waiting List: 2,674

- Every 10 minutes another name is added to the waiting list.
- On average, 18 people will pass each day waiting for their life saving transplant.
- 90% of Americans say they support donation, yet only 30% actually know the essential steps to take to be a donor.
- One organ and tissue donor can save 8 lives and enhance the lives of more than 50 individuals.

**FEATURE STORY**

“Precious Gifts” by Samantha Scholl, Heart & Kidney Recipient

I have been given the gift of life four times. I don’t know how I got so lucky, but I do not squander these gifts. Every day I think about the young woman named Tiffany whose heart beats in my chest. And every day I think about the kidney I received this past summer. These organ transplants saved my life – many times over – and I do not take that for granted. I was born with a congenital heart defect and had my first heart transplant at just three days old. For the first several years of my life, I lived a normal childhood and was able to run and dance and play like a regular kid. But at one point a routine echocardiogram showed coronary artery disease of the small vessels and so I was listed for transplant. At age 9 I received my second heart transplant and life continued. By my sophomore year in college, however, I started to feel really sluggish and experienced some bloating. I thought it was just stress from finals but another echo proved otherwise. I now had a blockage in the main artery of my heart and learned that my heart was creating antibodies to attack itself. My heart was on a suicide mission. Now I was tired all the time. The doctors started me on a variety of medical regimens to delay a third transplant because they said my body would reject a new heart in my current condition.

Soon the doctors said I was stable enough to be listed for another transplant. I had tremendous guilt about this because I had already received two hearts. How could I ask someone to help me again when I had already been saved twice? But my doctors assured me I would not be listed unless I was a viable candidate. And I knew I wasn’t done living. The call came on Dec. 4, 2012 and we rushed to the hospital. Because of the scar tissue from my previous two heart surgeries, the operation was difficult and my recovery was extensive. I needed physical therapy and speech therapy post op. I couldn’t eat or swallow. But the worst thing was coming out of surgery and being placed on dialysis because the doctors said my kidneys hadn’t survived the procedure. Organ recipients have to take powerful immunosuppressant drugs to ward off infection and prevent rejection by the body. The medicine I’ve been on all my life eventually destroyed my kidneys and my only hope for a life free of dialysis was to receive a new kidney. Just three months ago I received my new kidney and I feel fantastic. I now am living life as a typical college student – albeit one with several surgical scars!

**DID YOU KNOW**

Don’t Rain or Snow on Our Parade!

The CORE Washington Task Force came together on Friday December 6th to celebrate the “Gift of Life” and raise donor awareness in the Annual Washington Spirit of Christmas Parade in downtown Washington, PA. While it rained and snowed, the CORE volunteers came out in full CORE spirit prepared with their umbrellas in hand as they walked the parade route passing out candy and awareness bracelets to the spectators. Our community partner Washington Ford was gracious enough to donate a beautiful white full-size 2014 Ford Pickup Truck for use during the event. Members of the task force, which included recipients and donor families, as well as CORE staff and some family friends, all came out in support of this wondrous occasion and the opportunity to spread the word about the importance of organ and tissue donation. One spectator shouted out as our vehicle passed by and said, “Your organization saved my father’s life and also helped to save 7 other people. Thank you for all you do!” The volunteers were deeply touched by his comment and it made for a beautiful evening.

**CAMEOS OF CARING**

In November, Cynthia Valenta of the Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh received the 2013 Donate Life Award at the 15th Annual Camoes of Caring Awards Gala. She is recognized for her outstanding commitment to the donation program at Children's Hospital, along with her dedication to organ, tissue and cornea donors and their families.

Valenta currently serves as the clinical director for critical care services at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh. She is the administrator for the pediatric and neonatal intensive care units, transport team, respiratory care, critical care medicine and pastoral care, and responsible for 67 inpatient beds. She has more than 35 years of nursing experience and has serviced UPMC’s patients for the past 20 years in a variety of roles.
Let it Snow, Let it Snow, Let it Snow

Subfreezing temperatures and lots of snow fell in Altoona on Sunday December 8th, but that didn’t keep members of the CORE Altoona Task Force and FBLA students from taking part in the Annual Hollidaysburg Winterfest Parade. Ace Towing donated the flatbed truck and volunteers decorated with “Give the Gift of Life” as their holiday theme. They also wrapped packages, decorated a tree and a real fireplace adorned the float. Panera Bread in Altoona donated 500 cookies and Eat N Park donated 120 cookies for the CORE volunteers to pass out to spectators along the parade route.

WHAT’S NEW
Help CORE Support Team Pittsburgh at the Transplant Games

The 2014 Transplant Games will be held July 11-14 in Houston, Texas. The Transplant Games is a multisport event including everything from basketball to ballroom dancing. The event celebrates organ and tissue donors and brings awareness about the need for organ, tissue, and corneal donation.

To support the athletes of Team Pittsburgh who will be attending the 2014 Transplant Games in July, CORE will be matching the purchase of Donate Life License plates from now until June 2014 with all proceeds benefiting Team Pittsburgh. CORE will also match the amount already spent on the previous purchase of a Donate Life license plate. Team Pittsburgh is more than just a group of athletes but rather its membership is comprised of organ, tissue, and corneal recipients, living donors, and waiting list candidates who are committed to raising awareness about donation and increasing the number of designated donors.

For Pennsylvania Residents, the cost of a Donate Life license plate is $22.50. For West Virginia residents, the cost of a Donate Life license plate is $55. For information on purchasing a Donate Life license plate visit http://core.org/license_plates.asp.

If you have just purchased or currently have a Donate Life licence plate, please email your license plate number or a photo of your license plate to Michelle Christenson of CORE at mchristenson@core.org in order for CORE to complete the donation.

For more info about Team Pittsburgh visit www.teampittsburgh.org. For more info about the 2014 Transplant Games visit www.transplantgamesofamerica.org.
ROSE PARADE 2014
DONATE LIFE FLOAT

In early December, a floragraph decorating event was held at Pleasant Valley Hospital in Point Pleasant, WV. The floragraph portrait of Kevin Boyles is sponsored by CORE and will adorn one of the five lamps on the float.

CORE also recently learned that the Donate Life Float will be #15 in the Rose Parade lineup! The float will be shown in the first 30 minutes of the telecast on January 1st. Check your local listings for broadcast information. Below is the order of entries before and after the Donate Life Float.

#12 Hawai‘i All State Marching Band Na Koa Ali‘i
#13 Dole Packaged Foods “Sunrise at the Oasis”
#14 Tournament President and Budweiser Clydesdales
#15 Donate Life “Light Up the World”
#16 Sierra Madre Rose Float Association

HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT
Hospital Liaisons Convene for ACR Summit

On November 7th 2013, CORE hosted its first ACR learning summit at the CORE headquarters in O’Hara Township. The event was well attended with hospital representatives from across the Designated Service Area. These representatives are known to CORE as Advisory Council Representatives (ACR) and are the primary contact for the hospitals that we serve.

During the holiday season, the professional services staff would like to take the time to recognize these individuals for their dedication and commitment to the donation process throughout the year. “We can’t do it without them!” responded Jeff McBreen, a Professional Services Liaison for CORE. “They work tirelessly throughout the year to heighten understanding and support of CORE’s mission”. Indeed, these individuals wear many hats at their organizations and while donation is only one of their responsibilities at the hospital, they serve boldly for the donors and their families when necessary. They are responsible for the organ and tissue donation program at their hospital and for working with CORE to meet national benchmarks and best practices as well to constantly analyze the program for process improvement and educational needs.

The purpose of the summit was to give new ACRs a better understanding of their role and responsibilities. Moreover, the conference provided both fresh ideas for process improvement and networking opportunities for the more experienced attendees. One of the highlights included a panel discussion from experienced ACRs where they discussed the challenges and successes that they have faced in their role. Leda Heidenreich was one of the panel participants who expressed, “It was a great networking opportunity. Being an ACR has allowed me to continue beyond acute care and help others through organ and tissue donation.”

The conference also featured guest speaker Heidi Kranz, Corporate Strategic Officer, Midwest Transplant Network whose topic included “the Pillars of the donation process”. Heidi’s presentation allowed both ACRs and CORE staff to observe these principles from an outside OPO’s perspective.

The day ended with a touching story of donation success from Danielle McKain, mother of pediatric heart recipient, Jameson McKain, who had suffered from hypoplastic left heart syndrome since birth. Jameson’s story, along with the other topics discussed during the day, solidified the important role of our hospital ACRs in advancing their hospital’s donation program to the next level.

WESTERN PA KIDNEY SUPPORT GROUP

The Western PA Kidney Support Group is a non-profit organization which has 12 locations all over Western PA. The group is comprised of kidney patients, transplant recipients, caregivers, friends, family and professionals. Anyone is welcome to attend a meeting.

Please contact Jack Silverstein at either 412-427-2969 or silverjacki@yahoo.com

www.wpakidneysupport.org
MULTICULTURAL OUTREACH PROGRAM

SAVE THE DATES:

February 8, 2014 at 6:00pm; CORE presents “A Pledge for Life” Gospel Idol

The CORE Pittsburgh Multicultural Task Force is preparing to salute Black History Month and National Donor Day (February 14th) with a little friendly competition. CORE’s service area has talent, and we are looking for talented and inspirational individuals and groups to participate in Gospel Idol. Are you an up and coming superstar or a seasoned veteran? Take a chance at becoming CORE’s first Gospel Idol.

Gospel Idol is a talent search to celebrate life! Our goal is to achieve widespread organ donation awareness and education with a twist to faith-based communities, high schools, colleges and universities in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The event will be held at the University of Pittsburgh’s O’Hara Student Center Ballroom on February 8th.

The categories include Gospel Singer (Solo/Group/Choir), Christian Rap, Mime, Spoken Word and Liturgical Dance. To audition each act must submit a DVD or YouTube entry with duration 90 seconds or less. Judges will choose the top 10 finalists to perform live at the show on February 8th. Each finalist will be notified by phone and email. The cash awards are as follows: First Prize: $1000; Second Prize: $750; Third Prize: $500; Viewer’s Choice: $250.

All submissions must be postmarked by Wednesday, January 15, 2014. For more information, please visit www.core.org or call CORE at 1-800-366-6777.

March 25, 2014 at 8:00am
CORE & Donate Life Pennsylvania present “Our Health Matters”

“Our Health Matters” examines the minority health crisis in Pittsburgh. Diabetes, hypertension and obesity are just some of the conditions and diseases that affect minority communities in greater numbers. As a result, African-Americans and Hispanics represent more than 55 percent of those on the organ transplant waiting list and the crisis continues to worsen.

Join us for this free educational event and learn how you can help your community address this crisis. It’s time to take our health into our own hands.

DATE
March 25, 2014

LOCATION
The University Club
University of Pittsburgh
123 University Place, Pittsburgh, PA 15260

TIME
8 am – 11:30 am

COST
FREE

R.S.V.P.
To DonateLifePA.org/OurHealthMatters by Friday March 7, 2014
**FAMILY HOUSE DONATIONS**

In November, CORE staff collected food donations to benefit Family House so their pantries could be stocked for the holiday season. Because of the amount collected, they were able to split up all of the food among a number of the Family House facilities in Pittsburgh, making the holidays brighter for all of their guests!

Family House provides an affordable home away from home for patients and their families seeking medical treatment for serious or life-threatening illnesses in Pittsburgh.

**SIGN UP TO BECOME A DONOR**

[Donate Life Pennsylvania](www.donatelife-pa.org)

[Donate Life West Virginia](www.donatelifewv.org)

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**EYE BANK**

Karen Brown Joins Ambridge Lions Club

In keeping with CORE’s commitment to serving the community, Karen Brown, the director of CORE’s eye bank, has joined the Ambridge chapter of Lions Club International. As the world’s largest service club organization with 46,000 clubs and 1.35 million members, the Lions Club maintains a focus on vision-related initiatives.

This year, the Lions Club International reported over 2 million hours of sight-related service and Lions Eye Banks utilized 25,436 corneas for transplant. Additionally, from 2011 to 2012, Lions Eye Banks provided 14,280 eyes for research and education.

Karen, a resident of Ambridge since 1988, was inducted as a member of local Lions Chapter 6332 District 14-N at the October 14 meeting.

The Ambridge chapter has 21 members and supports the local community with many activities that assist the blind, such as supporting leader dogs, collecting and distributing eyeglasses and providing vision care to those in need.

Karen’s involvement with the Lions Club International will enable CORE to work them to promote donation within the community they serve.

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

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Events in **BOLD** need coverage. For more information please call or email: **Christy Conely or Marla D’Andries** at (412) 963-3550