



Arizona

THE CONNECTION

A YEAR IN REVIEW

WE MAKE THE MOST OF LIFE

JUNE 2019 - MAY 2020

Cover: Descriptions that encompass the meaning of the gift of life welcome employees and visitors with a word wall art installation as soon as they walk into DNA's new headquarters in Tempe.

Below: The Donate Life Arizona mascot, Reggie, poses with Spiderman and Captain America at the Heroes for Hope registration challenge kickoff breakfast February 2020.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

04 STORY OF GENEROSITY: SAMUEL WILLMOTT

06 OPTING FOR KINDNESS

08 MAKING CONNECTIONS TO MAKE AN IMPACT

10 DONATION BY THE NUMBERS

12 ARIZONA'S UNWAVERING GENEROSITY

14 CONSTRUCTING HOPE

16 SPREAD GENEROSITY, NOT GERMS

18 STORY OF HOPE: JASON BURRUEL

GREETINGS

FROM TIM BROWN, *PRESIDENT AND CEO*

We at Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) are grateful for the ongoing generosity of Arizona donors and their families in 2019 with 314 donors saving 844 lives with 1,005 organ transplants—more than any previous year. We are also grateful to see that, during a historic pandemic, the generosity of Arizonans has not wavered.

COVID-19 has challenged every aspect of our daily lives. Nowhere is that truer than in the health care setting where the tireless efforts to care for patients in new and everchanging circumstances is nothing short of heroic. At DNA, we have worked alongside these heroes and developed new ways to continue to coordinate lifesaving and life-healing gifts. This includes changes to our screening, testing and more importantly to how we communicate with families who are often not able to be at the hospital for donation conversations.

DNA has adapted to making connections with donor families to ensure the safety of transplantation during challenging times. At the end of the day, it saves lives.

Organ transplantation is not an elective surgery. It is a life-or-death surgical intervention for people in organ failure. Therefore, the gift of life has continued with many precautions because of the need in the community.

There are almost 111,000 people waiting for an organ transplant in the United States. Our responsibility is to offer them hope for continued life. I am proud to say, even in the face of a pandemic, the donation system in Arizona has remained strong. This is due to our excellent partners, the generosity of our donors and their families, and our amazing staff at DNA. I remain humbled and offer my sincerest thanks to all.

We remain humbled and offer our sincerest thank you to all who offer support for the gift of life.



With an emphasis on digital communication, DNA President and CEO Tim Brown discusses organizational updates and answers questions through video calls.

“We make the most of life through the gift of organ and tissue donation.”

SAMUEL WILLMOTT

A DONOR FAMILY'S MESSAGE TO RECIPIENTS

This story is the last thing Samuel "Sammy" Willmott would have wanted, his parents say.

"He did good things for others, but he didn't want attention," his dad, Ken Willmott, says through a teary smile—a smile inspired by his son who was always grinning from ear to ear.

Perhaps it was because Sammy learned early on the importance of giving to others—to help—whenever possible. A summer 2019 family trip to Fort Tuthill Recreation Area in Flagstaff highlighted his charitable spirit.

"The park was packed with a bunch of younger kids," Ken says. "Sam approached me and said, 'Let's give them our bikes and let them ride around.' Sammy went down there and worked with the children to ride some bikes. That's just Sam."

And what better way to help others than through your own passion? An avid bicyclist, the 16-year-old loved BMX and to speed along bike jump trails, where he would also take younger riders under his wing to lend his bike, teach them tricks, and offer support in a competitive sport.

"That was a big part of him," Jennifer Willmott, his mother, says explaining she wasn't surprised when he signed up as a donor when he got his driver's license. "I don't remember having a full conversation [about donation]. As a parent, I don't want to hear that. We didn't think it would come so soon."

In April 2020, Ken and Jennifer found Sammy in his room struggling to breathe. Three days later, he passed away at Cardon Children's Medical Center in Mesa. His cause of death was not determined, but doctors warn it could have been a lingering heart issue called long QT syndrome for which his two older sisters will soon be screened.

For a teenager who gave so much in his short life, he also gave to others after passing away by saving four lives.

"When they told us one of the recipients was a little baby who received part of the liver," Jennifer says, "that's so Sammy. He would be so happy that he had the chance to save a baby's life."

The support Sammy extended to friends and family was reciprocated by loved ones on the day Sammy gave life to others. Because of visitation limitations from COVID-19, dozens stood outside the hospital holding signs of support for the family. At 4:45 p.m. that day, they cheered for Sammy. Through such tragedy, Ken and Jennifer have this message for their son's recipients.

"Don't ever feel guilty about this because it wouldn't change anything. That's exactly what Sammy would have wanted. It gives meaning and hope to my son's death. Live your life and be happy."

And perhaps hop on a bicycle to honor Sammy and all donors who offered others a second chance. "We would love that!" Jennifer says.

"Don't ever
feel guilty ...
live your
life and be
happy."

KEN WILLMOTT, SAMMY'S FATHER



OPTING FOR KINDNESS

Joining the DonateLifeAZ Registry: Making your wishes known

You have the right to make end-of-life decisions for yourself, such as where your money and assets go or your funeral arrangements. Organ, eye and tissue donation is no different.

When you check the box at an Arizona Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Division (ADOT MVD) office or register online at DonateLifeAZ.org, you are giving first person authorization to be considered for the donation of organs, eyes and tissue after you pass away.

The Uniform Anatomical Gift Act (UAGA) defines a person's registry status as a legally binding decision at their time of death. This is known as first person authorization, meaning your decision cannot be revoked or changed by anyone other than you, much like other end-of-life decisions.

What is the DonateLifeAZ Registry?

When you register as an organ, eye and tissue donor in Arizona, you add your name and identifying information to the DonateLifeAZ Registry. It is administered and held confidential by Donor Network of Arizona (DNA), the state's federally designated organ procurement organization. This secure registry is private, and strict access is only given to essential DNA employees who work with registry matters directly.

Hospitals and medical professionals do not have direct access to the DonateLifeAZ Registry and cannot determine anyone's registry status.

Arizona hospitals are required to call DNA in the event of any death as part of their participation with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. At this time, DNA checks a person's registry status.

The DonateLifeAZ Registry is the only donation for transplantation database in Arizona and is used solely to determine someone's registry status when they pass away. Personal information in the DonateLifeAZ Registry is never sold, used or otherwise shared with outside parties for any reason.

If donation potential exists, a highly trained team at DNA—dedicated to meeting with families after the loss of a loved one—will contact next-of-kin to learn about the donor and explain the donation process if that person had previously registered. A potential donor without prior registration can donate with the authorization from the donor family.

Because it is a legally binding decision, DNA encourages registered donors to share their decision with family and friends, and why they made that decision, so there are no surprises. It may even encourage others to offer the gift of life as well.

GOING DIGITAL FOR DONATION REGISTRATIONS

As April 2020 approached, Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) and its partners prepared to celebrate another year of more lives saved by Arizona donors than any previous year. Boxes of festive blue and green decorations were packed, sealed and ready to ship to Arizona Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Division (ADOT MVD) offices throughout the state. Their staff would normally decorate in honor of National Donate Life Month. But these and other hallmarks of the annual celebration were shelved as stay-at-home orders went into effect and the nation adjusted to life during a pandemic.

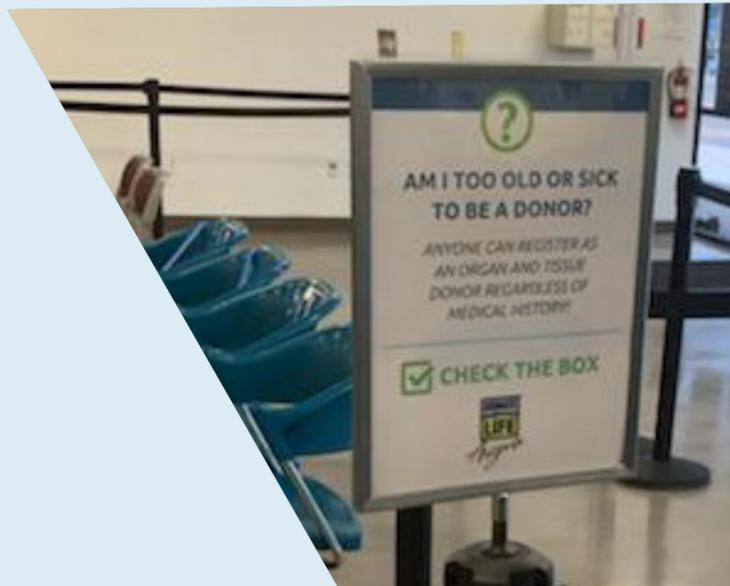
The new circumstances quickly taught us the difference between essential and nonessential, and we watched everyday people be unveiled as heroes. Those faithfully preparing or shopping for customers' food, restocking shelves at grocery stores, delivering mail and other goods, or taking care of our loved ones who fell ill all likely rely on another essential service: transportation.

ADOT MVD worked hard to keep Arizona running while safeguarding the public and their staff by requiring appointments for all in-person transactions at their offices. The agency extended

the Travel ID deadline by a year to Oct. 1, 2021, and they allowed an extra six months to anyone whose driver's license expired between March 1 and Sept. 1, 2020. These measures successfully reduced the number of people entering an ADOT MVD office, but the restrictions have also resulted in fewer people checking the box to register as a donor by as much as nearly 80%.

More than 95% of new organ, eye and tissue donor registrations occur during an ADOT MVD transaction. And thanks to the long-standing and thoughtful partnership between DNA and ADOT MVD, we continue to collaborate on growing the registry and making it easier for individuals to register as a donor. During social distancing and ADOT MVD office restrictions, the offices now display Donate Life Arizona signs about spreading generosity by signing up to offer the gift of life.

ADOT MVD recognizes the impact COVID-19 has had on the registry, and the DNA team is grateful to ADOT MVD Director Eric Jorgensen who released a statement that helped remind Arizonans of the various ways people can register to save and improve lives through organ and tissue donation.



Photos: Because of COVID-19, no fun decorations for April 2020, but ADOT MVD supported Donate Life Arizona's "Spread Generosity, Not Germs" campaign in offices throughout the state.

MAKING CONNECTIONS TO MAKE AN IMPACT

June 2019 -
May 2020



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

239k ARIZONANS REGISTERED
as organ, eye and tissue donors for the first time.

1,269 VOLUNTEER HOURS
dedicated to educating others on the lifesaving message of donation.

184 VOLUNTEERS
committed to sharing generosity in Arizona.

70 EVENTS
across the state reached thousands of people.



THE GIFT OF DONATION

309 ORGAN DONORS
gave a second chance to those waiting for a lifesaving transplant.

755 OCULAR DONORS
restored sight to others.

1,684 TISSUE DONORS
gave the gift of healing.

322 HEART VALVE DONORS
saved lives.



SHARING HOPE

820 LIVES SAVED
thanks to the generosity of donors and their families.

20k LETTERS MAILED
to provide comfort and correspondence.

181 ORGAN DONORS
who registered their wishes gave the gift of life.

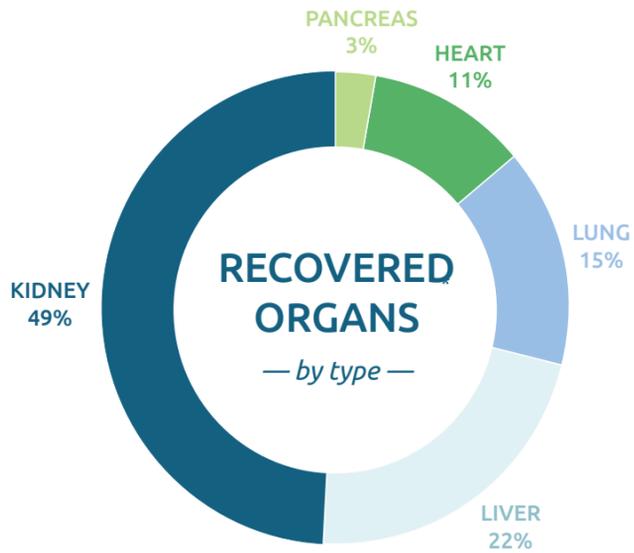
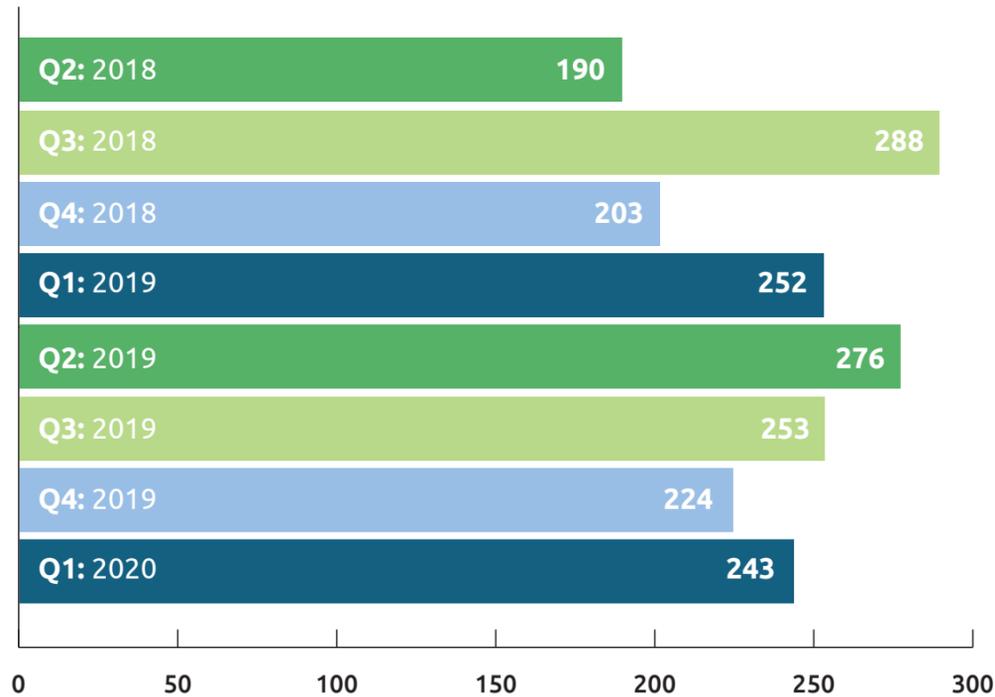
50 BIRTH TISSUE DONORS
provided healing to others after giving birth.



DONATION BY THE NUMBERS

*Reflects data from June 2019 to May 2020

ORGANS TRANSPLANTED



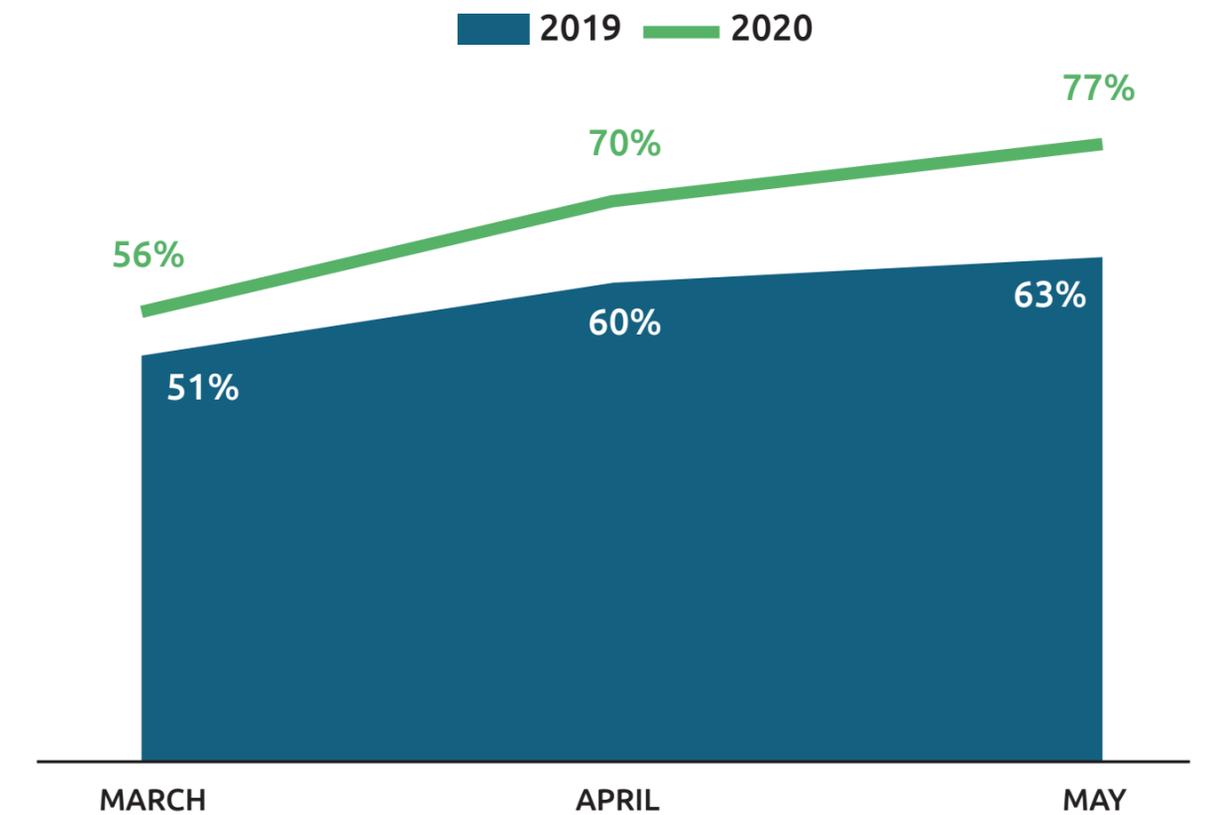
67% OF ORGANS RECOVERED IN ARIZONA WERE TRANSPLANTED IN ARIZONA*

AUTHORIZATION RATES DURING COVID-19

The outcome of all organ donation conversations, regardless of registry status or final donor suitability.



During COVID-19, organ donation authorization rates have increased and are higher than those of the previous year.



ARIZONA'S UNWAVERING GENEROSITY

OPTIONS FOR EVERYONE TO HELP

Most annual events were canceled because of the global pandemic, but there was still a chance to engage the community before COVID-19.

STUDENTS SAVING LIVES

The start of a new school year is especially busy for students, yet in fall 2019, more than 3,200 students across Arizona made time to register as organ, eye and tissue donors.

In August, Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) partnered with student organizations at the four major universities in the state to attend events to welcome new and returning students to their campuses. Students stopped by the Donate Life Arizona tent to learn about donation, join the DonatLifeAZ Registry, and take a free T-shirt to show their support.

HOSA Future Medical Professionals also helped to educate and register peers on high school campuses in October. Twenty Arizona HOSA chapters hosted registration drives, assemblies and shared social media content to encourage others to register to save lives.

A SPECIAL CELEBRATION

Imagine more than 1,400 donor families, transplant recipients, living donors and Donate Life Arizona volunteers gathered to reflect on the legacies of

donor heroes. That was DNA's annual Celebration of Life Oct. 20, 2019. The special event offered donor families an avenue to celebrate their loved ones' generosity and share their journey of loss, hope and healing while surrounded by people with common experience. The celebration was highlighted with music, bounce houses, lawn games, a photo booth, food, a memory garden and more. Because of recent events, the 2020 version of this event will be hosted online.

MARCHING FOR LIFE

Donor families and recipients walked side-by-side in Donate Life Arizona's parade entry to the Fiesta Bowl Parade in December 2019, sharing the legacies created through organ, eye and tissue donation. Among them included Dana Ayers, a donor mom, who held a poster honoring her 16-year-old daughter, Hannah Pairrett.

Pairrett was athletic, charitable and selfless. After her passing, she gave the gift of life to five people. The Fiesta Bowl Parade, which is broadcast live on local news every year, is an incredible opportunity to showcase these stories of generosity and healing to Arizona.

Left: Los Changuitos Feos de Tucson, a mariachi band with a connection to donation, entertained guests with Donate Life Arizona's mascot at the annual Celebration of Life.

Right: Members of Northern Arizona University's Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity helped to register donors at their school's Welcome Week Community Fair.

BEGINNING LIFE WITH KINDNESS

When Neqwa "Nikki" Hill learned about the birth tissue donation program, she decided her daughter, Arya Brielle, would start her life with something this world needs more of: kindness and generosity. Hill celebrated her first donation anniversary—as well as her daughter's first birthday—in February 2020.

Donor Network of Arizona's (DNA) birth tissue program started in summer 2018. It offered a new way to uphold the mission of making the most of life by donating something typically discarded as waste.

"When Arya is old enough, I will share with her that she has been contributing to the change that the world needs since the day she was born," Hill says. "Kindness is free to give, but priceless to receive. With that mindset, she can move mountains."

After a birth tissue donor gives birth through a scheduled caesarian section to a full-term baby, trained medical staff store the placenta in a sterile container. Nothing about the delivery

process changes. Doctors use this donated tissue to stimulate a recipient's healing mechanism for pain, inflammation or scar tissue, with the chance to help up to 50 people through one donation. From June 2019 to May 2020, DNA successfully coordinated with 50 birth tissue donors.

Tamara Smolic, DNA's birth tissue coordinator, says COVID-19 has affected the program with a decrease in this type of donation, but she's hopeful for the year to come. She is excited to continue to build great relationships with many of the professionals at hospitals and OB-GYN offices throughout the Valley and the state.

"My hope is that we will see an increase in birth tissue donation," Smolic says. "Birth tissue donation is such a great introduction to the idea of helping others. I can't wait until this type of donation is as well-known as organ, eye and tissue donation."

Expectant mothers with planned caesarian sections can learn more about DNA's birth tissue donation program by visiting BirthTissue.DNAZ.org or calling 602-294-2896.



Photos: Arizona mother and birth tissue donor, Neqwa "Nikki" Hill holds her baby Arya Brielle.



CONSTRUCTING HOPE: A NEW HOME FOR DONATION

After more than a year of hard work, and years of planning, we are moving into our new headquarters for Arizona's organ, eye and tissue donation July 2020.

Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) broke ground on a new home in Tempe, March 5, 2019. This new location is the effective solution for the unique needs of a nonprofit organ procurement organization that also serves as an eye bank and a tissue recovery agency as donation continued its fourth consecutive year of lifesaving growth.

With three new OR suites and a larger dedicated clinical space, DNA can now work more efficiently to provide a time-sensitive lifesaving service. DNA will use this space for some public and professional education outreach as well. The new home also supports DNA's long-term strategic plan to add almost 100 new jobs.

The space is designed to be inviting to the public, which offers a chance to visit and learn about DNA's mission and work. The new headquarters will provide more room to honor donors and their families, with spaces designated to

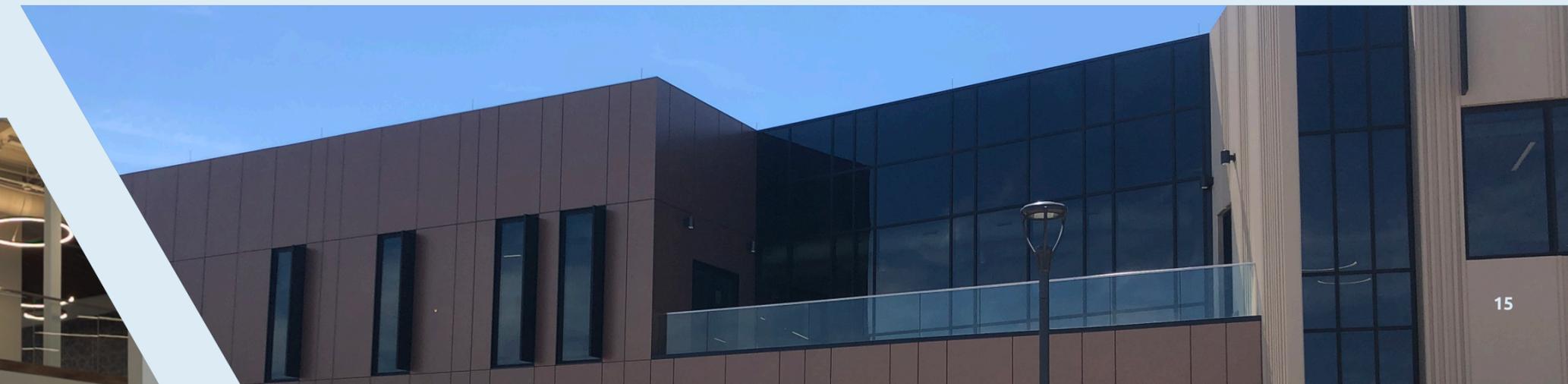
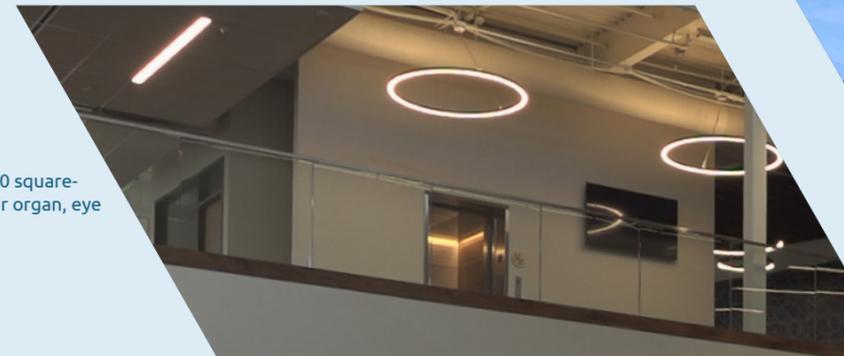
donor family conversations, sharing stories of donor heroes, and multiple elements to remind Arizona of the ongoing need for lifesaving donation.

At the groundbreaking ceremony in 2019, donor sister Jennifer Loredo spoke about what DNA and this new space for donation means for her and her brother Jacob Daily, an organ, eye and tissue donor who gave multiple gifts of life.

"[Donation] is a family I never saw myself being a part of, but it's a family that has embraced me and I am so grateful," Loredo says. "I don't ever want anyone to forget my brother."

With this new building, we reaffirm our commitment to never forget Daily and all our donor heroes. As donation continues to grow across the nation and within our state, DNA will also expand its potential to save even more lives.

Photos: A sneak peek into the new 70,000 square-foot building that will be the main hub for organ, eye and tissue donation in Arizona.



SPREAD GENEROSITY, NOT GERMS



CARING DURING QUARANTINE

As businesses closed their doors and more people stayed home in hopes of flattening the curve of coronavirus infections, hospitals in Arizona ramped up to handle an influx of critical patients. Even during such extraordinary times, the fear of the unknown did not stop nurses, doctors and other health care employees from stepping in to help the public.

This came as no surprise to Donor Network of Arizona (DNA), privileged to work alongside hospital partners and witness the passion and grace with which they save lives every day.

Many hospitals still found ways to celebrate National Donate Life Month through flag-raising and social media. Their commitment to donation, despite the global pandemic, humbles us.

Like the country, DNA watched reports of health care workers risking everything to care for the ill, often without the proper protection or resources. The hours were long, the work was strenuous, and their normal support systems were taken away from them.

As we watched the levels of day-to-day supplies dip all over the country, we knew our health care partners were likely struggling and in need as well. Throughout

the state, DNA dropped off care kits to remind hospital staff that when they feel like they don't have time to take a break, it's probably when they need a break the most.

DNA assembled care kits to support hospitals filled with items, such as food, lip balm, hair ties, face wipes and other needed items. Tips on combatting compassion fatigue were included in hopes of reminding our partners to take care of their mental health as well.

After spending two hours distributing care kit items to employees, Maria Ringle, ICU manager at Valleywise Health Medical Center in Phoenix, shared that her team was surprised by the gesture.

"They were so grateful and impressed with the thoughtfulness of the items available for them to pick from," Ringle says. "Your team really knows what matters to those who have to wear masks all day!"

The lifesaving work could not be done without such partnerships, and we hope these small tokens of gratitude help them to take care of themselves as they care for others during a national crisis.

Left: DNA provided care kits to Arizona hospitals with a reminder to spread generosity, not germs. Kits were filled with essentials to keep hospital staff going.

Right: Staff at Valleywise Health Medical Center select contents from DNA's care kits.



DONATE LIFE MONTH AT A DISTANCE

National Donate Life Month, observed every April, looked far from normal in 2020.

A statewide stay-at-home order effectively canceled all events in April. Most years, Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) participates in more than 100 events in April alone to inform and register the public as donors. This generates roughly 1,000 new organ, eye and tissue donor registrations—a major lifesaving opportunity missed this year.

But organ transplants, a life-or-death surgical intervention, were not canceled. The 111,000 people who wait for lifesaving transplants can't wait. Hope must continue and our Donate Life Arizona volunteers made sure it did.

DNA launched a new effort: Spread Generosity, Not Germs. With this message, we asked Donate Life Arizona volunteers, as well as hospital and community partners, to act as our digital ambassadors to reach new groups while respecting their health and safety.

Each week a certain tactic was highlighted. Donate Life Arizona volunteers, as well as some of DNA's hospital partners, engaged people on

social media through different groups, local businesses and neighborhoods apps. They also reached out to friends, family, co-workers and faith-based communities to encourage them to consider the generosity of registering as a donor in a challenging time.

Any act of generosity was encouraged to be shared and tagged with #SpreadGenerosityNotGerms. With the promotion of selfless acts, donation became the central focus.

"Although we are a vulnerable population, we want to give back and tell our story," says Evelyn Strobe, a heart recipient and Donate Life Arizona volunteer. "The 'Spread Generosity, Not Germs' campaign gave us a way to share our passion during what was still a meaningful month, however different."

On April 30, the month was beautifully wrapped up with Donor Remembrance Day—a moment to celebrate the heroes who said yes to donation. Donate Life Arizona hosted a Facebook Live event to commemorate this day with a heartfelt thank you from double-lung recipient, Morgan Cheney, and lovely words from the mother of her donor.



Corner: Pediatric intensive care nurses at Cardon Children's Medical Center in Mesa show their donation spirit wearing Donate Life shirts in April.

Bottom Right: Morgan Cheney, double-lung recipient, discussed the importance of remembering organ, eye and tissue donors on Facebook Live for Donor Remembrance Day April 30, 2020.

JASON BURRUEL

ONE HEART DONATION SAVED HIS LIFE—TWICE

“Within the first three days, they told my wife to get my affairs in order,” says Jason Burruel, about his COVID-19 diagnosis. “[The doctors] weren’t sure I was going to make it.”

There are some holes in the story Burruel shares on his road to recovery from the coronavirus because he was in a medically induced coma during the most intense part of his treatment. In isolation, placed chest down in the ICU, and intubated for at least 11 days at Mayo Clinic Hospital in Phoenix—which is where he received his lifesaving heart transplant three years earlier—he put his life in the hands of doctors a second time.

“I was admitted Easter Sunday. That’s what I remember,” he says about not being able to see his wife the entire time. “For about two weeks, I have no recollection of what happened.”

As a heart recipient, he had been taking daily medications that suppress his immune system to prevent his body from rejecting the gift of life he received. That also made him an easy target for the disease, with a faster onset of symptoms and greater potential for complications after contact with an infected person.

Fevers, a positive COVID-19 test, chest X-rays and a CT scan later, doctors swiftly put him on a ventilator. His life was in immediate danger.

“Once my lungs started opening up, they put me on my back,” he says from a hospital bed. “I’m doing a lot better—lungs have started clearing.”

Burruel acknowledges his chances of survival were grim, but if he had his old heart, he says it may have been worse.

“My donor heart was so strong that it actually helped me,” he says. “My lungs took a hit. My kidneys took a hit. But my donated heart is strong and pumping away. I think the new heart actually saved my life—again—more than anything else.”

It was a scary wake-up call for Burruel to learn that in only a matter of days his life could have ended.

“When people start hanging out again like normal, I hope they stay smart,” he asks of the public. “Be conscience of the fact that there have always been diseases out there that immunosuppressed people can catch from you, even beyond COVID.”

After more than a month in the hospital, restoring lung function, getting an appetite back, and working against muscle atrophy all at once were his final steps to getting healthy. Burruel became that much more grateful for his generous donor and their family for an unforeseen blessing that came from his 2016 transplant, saving his life twice.

“I think the
new heart
actually saved
my life—again—
more than
anything else.”

JASON BURRUEL, HEART RECIPIENT

“I’M VERY GRATEFUL FOR EVERYTHING DONOR NETWORK OF ARIZONA HAS DONE—NOT ONLY FOR ME BUT FOR MY FAMILY AND THE OTHER DONOR FAMILIES OUT THERE,” SAYS JENNIFER LOREDO, DONOR SISTER TO JACOB DAILY, AT THE GROUNDBREAKING FOR DNA’S NEW BUILDING IN TEMPE.

Register as an organ, eye and tissue donor at [DonateLifeAZ.org](https://www.donatelifeaz.org)



Contributors:
Tim Brown
Sara Pace Jones
Kristine Stevenson

Writers and Editors:
Katie Benton
Irasema Celis
Alexa Citro
Ashley Espinoza
Kris Patterson
Miranda Reddy
Olivia Richards
Nico Santos
Ashley Siegel
Julia Young