



Arizona

THE CONNECTION

A YEAR IN REVIEW

WE MAKE THE MOST OF LIFE
JUNE 2021 - MAY 2022

Cover: Our mascot, Reggie the Donor Cactus, joined the DNA team for lunch and games during the Blue & Green Day celebration at the Tempe main office in April 2022.

Below: Both online and in-person handprints were on the hood and bumper of NASCAR Xfinity Series driver Joey Gase's car for a race in November 2021 to honor an organ, eye and tissue donor.

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GREETINGS

FROM TIM BROWN, PRESIDENT AND CEO

We have been through a significant amount of change over the past two years—change that was expected, such as Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) moving to its new facility in Tempe, as well as unexpected in the form of the global pandemic. Change can be hard. At the same time, change encourages innovation. I am in awe how the DNA team has rolled with the changing landscape since 2020.

While most of our team continued to work onsite at DNA or in hospitals and partner facilities, we have had some who worked primarily from home for much of 2020 and 2021. In 2022, those at-home staff members have returned through a hybrid approach of working at home and the office. DNA emphasized safety while reinvigorating the team's synergy and an emphasis of inclusive, positive experiences for all.

Everything we do, we view it through the lens of our organization's vision. So, it's no mystery that the generosity in our state shows through a record number of organ, tissue, heart valve and placenta donors, and more than 218,000 new registered donors in Arizona over the last year, June 2021 to May 2022. Together, as a community, we accomplished this to save and heal more lives than ever before with more than 40,000 organ transplants across the U.S. last year alone.

As you go through this newsletter, you'll also explore how we've been part of improving how organizations like ours can recover, better preserve, and match organs to help more people in Arizona and beyond.

Please accept our sincerest gratitude as we remember our donor heroes, their families, and recipients through this newsletter and look forward to helping even more people over the next 12 months.



Tim smiles after grabbing some food truck tacos on a Work Onsite Wednesday (WOW) Day as part of phasing all employees back into DNA's Tempe-based main office.

MISSION

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

VISION

We challenge ourselves and others every day to realize Arizona's potential to save and improve lives.

VALEN KRASNOV

THE TUMMY ANGEL

Valen Krasnov was just 3 years old when his parents learned that he was in liver failure and urgently needed a transplant. The shocking news came after Valen and his father, Zaccarri Krasnov, went on a camping trip. It was only afterward that they noticed Valen's eyes were almost completely yellow. With the onset of jaundice, Valen was admitted to the hospital in June 2021.

"We really thought we would bring him to the hospital, get some medicine, and go home," says his mother, Kelsey Krasnov. Luckily, Valen matched and received a transplant within 12 hours of being put on the transplant list, an eye-opening indication of just how sick he truly was. "We're so grateful we only waited 12 hours when others wait years," says Zaccarri.

Now, more than a year after Valen's transplant, "he's doing really well. He's really happy," Kelsey says. Since Valen was otherwise healthy before the rapid onset of his illness and transplant, there's been an adjustment period for the family as they get used to the changes that come with an organ transplant. Things are looking up as Valen, now 4 years old, is getting back into his routine and finally able to go swimming, which was a big goal of his.

"We think about [Valen's donor] every day," says Kelsey.

They call his donor the "tummy angel" and are already thinking of ways to make family traditions to celebrate the donor and make sure the donor is

remembered. Kelsey and Zaccarri are looking forward to sending a letter to Valen's donor's family to express their gratitude for their selflessness that was the key factor in extending Valen's life.

"I started writing some things out about what I want to say in our letter. There's so much I want to say, but there are not enough words. We are very grateful ... We got a second chance with him," says Kelsey.

The mother of two is doing her part in encouraging people to register as organ, eye and tissue donors by explaining how it impacted her family. She recalls recently being at an Arizona Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Division office when she realized a woman next to her was debating on checking the box to become a registered donor.

"I told her Valen's entire story, and she checked the box to become an organ donor," Kelsey recalls.

There are more than 106,000 people waiting on the organ transplant list, more than 1,500 in Arizona alone, and every person who becomes an organ donor gives hope to those who are still waiting. Thanks to the generosity of an organ donor, Valen received a second chance at life.

**"We got a
second chance
with him."**

KELSEY KRASNOV, VALEN'S MOTHER



DE&I: YOU & I TOGETHER

It’s been two years since President and CEO Tim Brown issued a call to action urging employees to stand together for justice and equality.

“Our work at DNA exemplifies the best of humanity in the worst of times, and that same humanity is what is required of us [now],” he said in an email in summer 2020.

Donor Network of Arizona’s (DNA) focus included developing a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy and program, creating DNA’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I) Committee, and developing HR policies and practices that meet and exceed equal employment opportunity standards and legal obligations.

Patricia Pace Anderson, Jason Haile and Teresa Baca—employees from different departments at DNA—served as the first DE&I committee leads to kick off this initiative with 23 people who volunteered as committee members. The program and committee are supported by the DE&I leadership sponsors Sara Pace Jones, Kris Patterson, Kelsie McClendon, the entire executive leadership team, and our DE&I consultant Dr. Joel Martin, president of Triad West, Inc.

The DE&I program and committee aim to improve diversity, equity and inclusion to ensure a consistently positive work experience for all. Out of an initial

survey assessing the needs of our organization came a culture of learning, practicing and doing better together. Since the survey, there have been workshops, training for leaders and employees, roundtable discussions on topics such as microaggressions, how to mitigate them, and how to be a DE&I advocate anywhere in the organization. Overall, employees highly rate the DE&I training, and 96% agree they understand how to recognize and mitigate microaggressions.

As a critical partner to health care providers, DNA knows of the disparities plaguing different communities. In fact, our organization has engaged with multicultural communities to improve their access to the gift of life since 2016. The Multicultural Committee provides education and increases donor registrations, among other efforts. DNA is equally committed to addressing the systems that allow these disparities to persist, but as DE&I Committee Chair Haile shared, “The changes have to start with us, within DNA.”

Ensuring our team and leadership proactively seek and improve diversity, equity, inclusion and an overall positive work experience. It requires

courageous conversations among employees, leadership and experts in the field. Martin is helping DNA facilitate these conversations. She speaks highly of DNA and its commitment to change.

Kelsie McClendon, Human Resources director, says DNA already had a great work environment and culture as evident from employee feedback on their experience and how they vouch for DNA as a great employer. The relatively new DE&I program is a next-level approach.

“The DE&I program is part of our overall strategy to have talented, mission-motivated employees to meet the current and future needs of DNA, realize even greater donation, and save more lives,” McClendon says.

Top left: The DNA group, Planet Posse, joined the Multicultural Committee for some rest in the shade after a day of sowing soil, planting herbs, and harvesting vegetables with the TigerMountain Foundation “Garden of Tomorrow” event in April 2022.

Top right: (l to r) Secretary Teresa Baca, Chair Patricia Pace Anderson and Vice Chair Jason Haile were the first leads of DNA’s DE&I Committee.

Bottom: The Multicultural Committee and Donate Life Arizona volunteers participated in the Arizona MLK Celebration March & Festival for the first time as a result of DNA’s ongoing efforts to diversify outreach.



CONNECTIONS TO MAKE AN IMPACT

June 2021 -
May 2022



COMMUNITY OUTREACH



218k ARIZONANS REGISTERED
as organ, eye and tissue donors for the first time.

140 VOLUNTEERS
dedicated to educating others on the lifesaving message of donation.

510k ARIZONANS REACHED
across DonateLifeAZ social media platforms.

873 MEDIA STORIES
mentioned donation in Arizona.



THE GIFT OF DONATION

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

831 CORNEA DONORS
restored sight to others.

1,443 TISSUE DONORS
gave the gift of healing.

372 HEART VALVE DONORS
saved lives.



SHARING HOPE

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

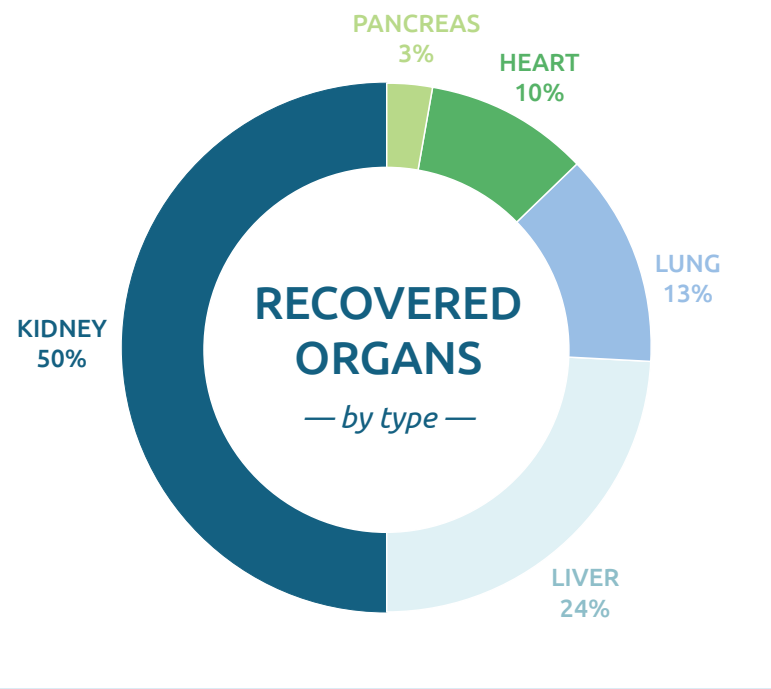
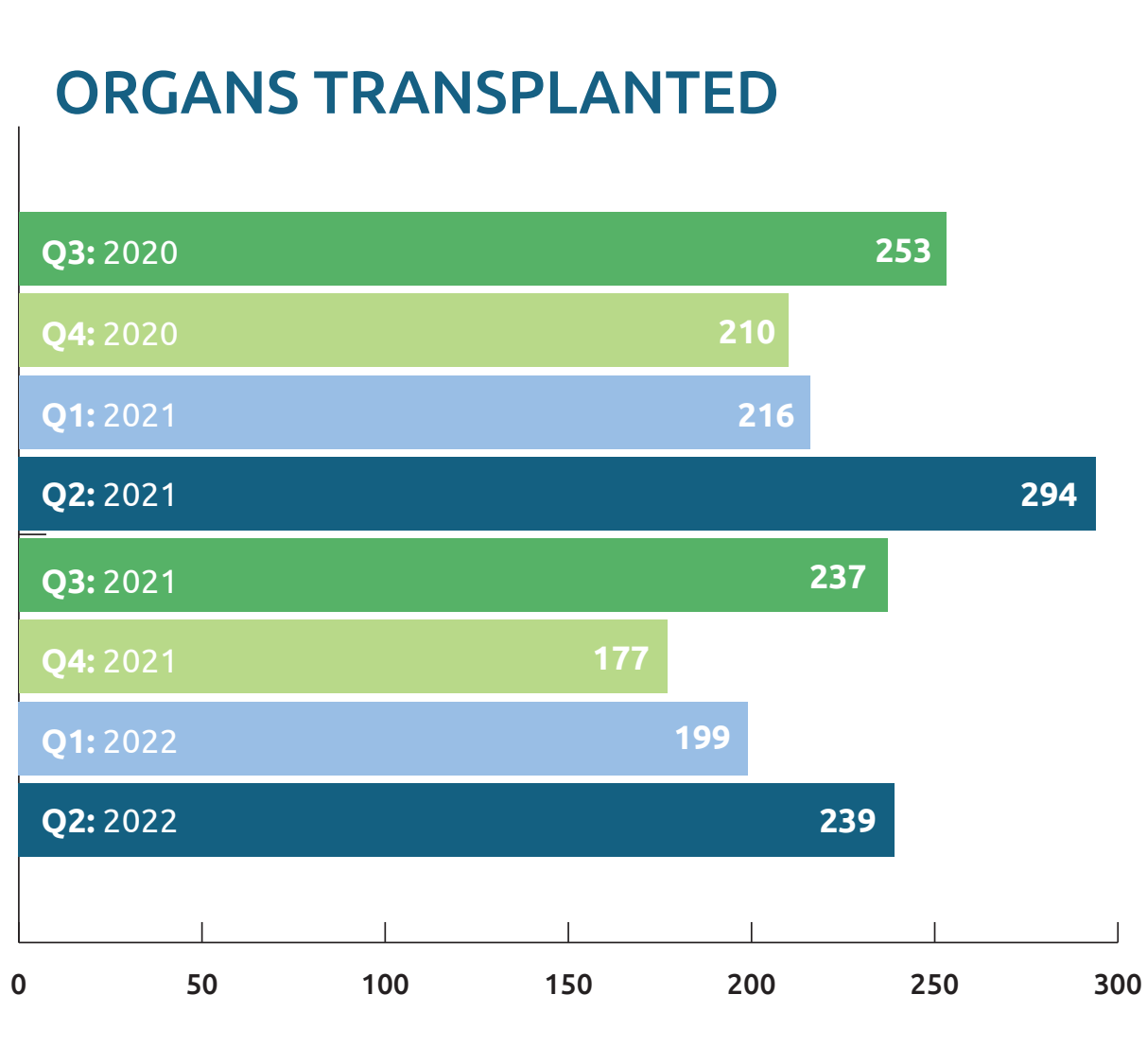
21,079 LETTERS MAILED
to provide comfort and correspondence.

185 ORGAN DONORS
who gave the gift of life had previously registered their decision.

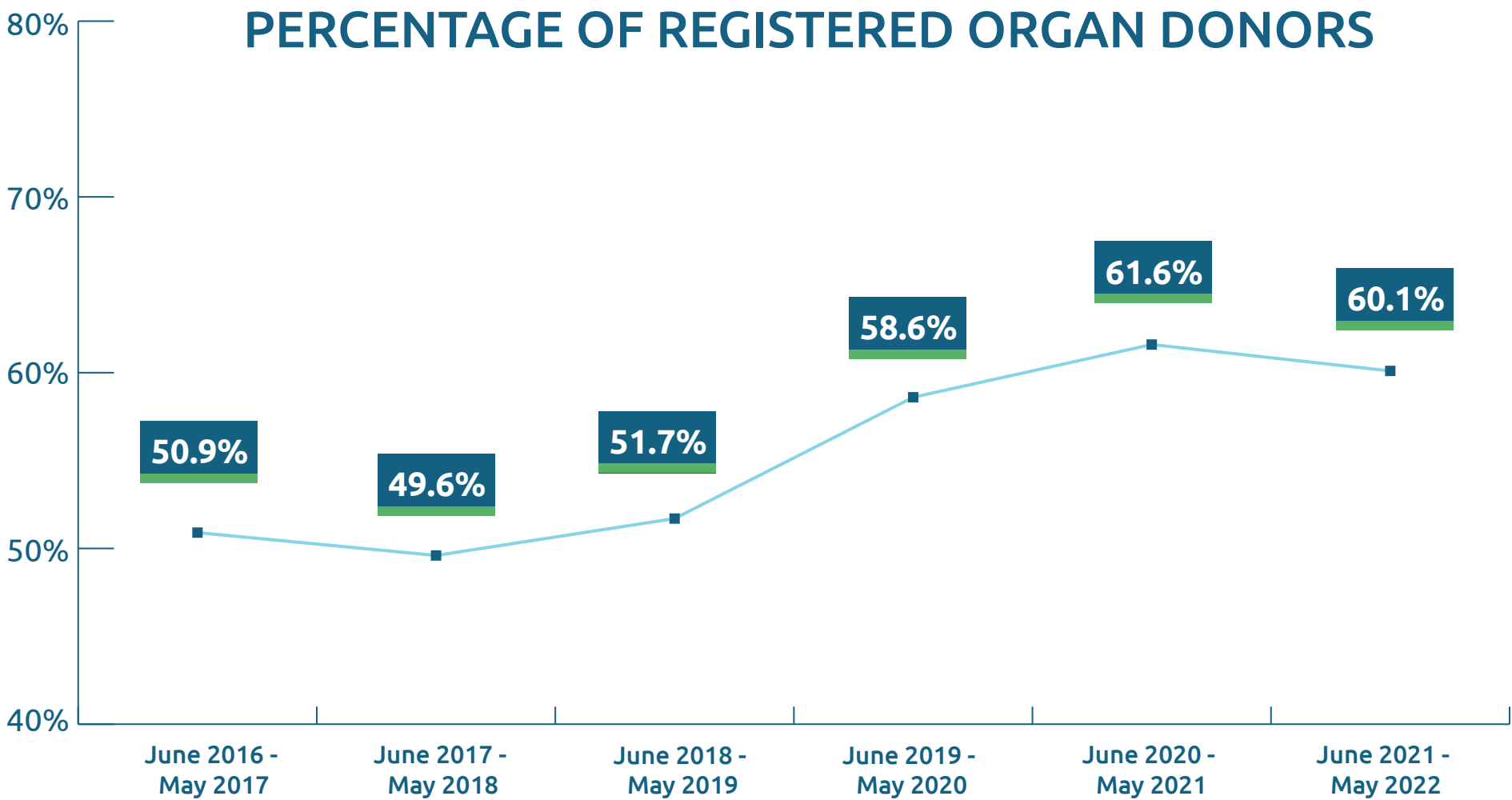
283 BIRTH TISSUE DONORS
provided healing to others after giving birth.

DONATION BY THE NUMBERS

**Reflects data from June 2021 to May 2022*



61% OF ORGANS RECOVERED IN ARIZONA WERE TRANSPLANTED IN ARIZONA



DEVELOPMENTS IN DONATION

TAKING LOVE FARTHER

Love comes from our hearts. However, there has been a challenge with heart transplants and how far that love could travel. Now, a recent FDA premarket approval gives heart donation a new set of wings.

The FDA previously approved use of the TransMedics Organ Care System (OCS) Heart System for donors after brain death¹. Now, the option for OCS includes hearts through donation after circulatory death² (DCD), which previously meant the donor’s whole heart was not viable for transplant—rather typically only the aortic and pulmonary valves, a lifesaving type of tissue donation.

The OCS keeps a donated heart warm after recovery, and it provides the heart with oxygen and nutrients, according to FDA. One major advantage is that it bypasses the four-hour transplant window on donated hearts with cold preservation.

“Without technologies like OCS and organ preservation, DCD heart recovery would be logistically difficult,” says Hobby Alsaleh, DNA clinical nurse educator supervisor. “They allow the organ to be cared for outside of the body, which allows transplant teams to travel farther for recoveries.”



Left: DNA was part of proving this technology works and can help to save even more lives through heart transplant, with a heart shortly after transplant attached to an OCS, nicknamed heart in a box, pictured here.

In fact, with this new technology, a team at Duke University in North Carolina successfully transplanted a heart after 16 hours of OCS preservation.

“We always look for opportunities to increase transplants,” says Dr. Victor Pretorius. He serves as a cardiothoracic surgeon at University of California San Diego (UCSD) and the surgical director of UCSD’s heart transplant program. His team at UCSD was among the first to accept hearts donated after circulatory death under the care of an OCS and have accepted 14 hearts from Donor Network of Arizona for transplant through this route as of June 28, 2022.

“The biggest barrier is the lack of donor organs due to San Diego’s unique geographic limitations. With the OCS, we’ve opened opportunities with hearts that previously were not viable,” Pretorius says.

There are no measurable differences in the success of a heart transplant from a donor through brain death compared to a DCD donor using the OCS, according to Pretorius. The biggest difference is a heart donor from Arizona could now save the life of someone in New York since the heart can travel farther by plane without damage.

Mentioned here: Brain death and DCD: The two avenues of deceased donation

1. Brain death is the irreversible cessation of all brain activity, including the brain and brain stem. The brain dies from lack of blood/oxygenation. Most organ donation occurs after brain death declaration. A hospital physician, in accordance with accepted medical standards and following the hospital policy, must make the diagnosis of brain death.
2. Circulatory death is the irreversible cessation of all circulatory and respiratory function. Patients who die through circulatory death can donate tissues, corneas, and in some cases, organs (now including hearts and lungs) following the planned, family-authorized withdrawal of ventilator support and other medical treatment via donation after circulatory death (DCD).

SCOPING OUT WAYS TO SAVE MORE PEOPLE

Technology is an ever-changing landscape. From the latest smartphone every year in our hands, to space tourism high above, it feels like technological advances appear endlessly all around us.

The realm of organ, eye and tissue donation is no different. And in March, we saw one of the most interesting advances to date.

Kidneys and livers occasionally need to be biopsied post-recovery to check for cancer or other damage before an organ transplant surgeon approves and agrees to accept it. In partnership with the Nevada based telehealth provider, Specialist Direct, Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) has been able to lead the way for a new organ procurement organization (OPO) biopsy process to better assess a donated organ’s health and viability.

Normally, this process must be done outside of an OPO, such as in a hospital pathology lab and read by a pathologist—all done in person. However, utilizing a microscope from Specialist Direct now eliminates the limitations of the in-person requirement for the biopsy imaging. Once the biopsy slide is complete, the slide is put under the special microscope, and it is scanned and digitized. That digital version is sent to Specialist Direct for a transplant pathologist to review before sharing with United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), the national organization ultimately responsible for the placement of donated organs.

Any transplant center that has a matching waiting list patient for the organ can access the images for the transplant team to make a final decision whether to accept the organ. This system also allows for more transplant physicians to view the same kidneys and livers, for example, which may have positive implications on the rate of discarding already-recovered organs.

“Having these expedited pathology interpretations and real-time sharing of biopsy images enables us to transplant more lifesaving organs,” says Wendy Van Kirk, director of Organ Recovery Services at DNA, which is the final goal of all OPOs in the U.S.

Like most aspects of life, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted donation for transplantation in a few ways. Naturally, transplant professionals had to find new ways to continue the lifesaving work because there is an ongoing waiting list for those in organ failure. Both technology and medicine are advancing, and DNA constantly works to advance right alongside them.



Above: The microscope from Specialist Direct set up as it would be in a hospital pathology lab.

Below: A left and right biopsied kidney on slides that will be scanned by the microscope, digitized, and sent to Specialist Direct for review.



SHARING DONOR LEGACIES WITH LAWMAKERS

Donate Life Day at the Capitol 2022

In 2014, Marissa “Roo” Pummill’s legacy started when her mother, Kellye Pummill, decided to donate her daughter’s organs. Roo was an animal lover, a compassionate person, and her sense of empathy lives on through her gift of donation. Thanks to Roo, six transplant recipients received the phone call they had been desperately waiting for.

Kellye and her dog, Ozzy, joined Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) for Donate Life Day at the Capitol March 24, 2022, to honor her daughter and keep her memory alive.

DNA hosts Donate Life Day at the Capitol annually to allow people who have been directly impacted by donation to speak to their state senators and representatives about how donation is vital and necessary to sustain life.

Donor family members, living donors and organ, eye and tissue recipients joined the event for a luncheon with their legislators as well and bonded with each other through their personal connections to donation. The gift of life truly changes lives, and the DNA team is grateful for opportunities to help the community connect and make a difference.

Mark Larson is one of those people whose life was changed, and he is more than willing to share his story to those who listen. Larson has been to four Donate Life Days at the Capitol and emphasizes how important it is for recipients to share how donation changed the course of their lives.

“All the legislators have been receptive, and there seems to be a positive ambiance [at the meetings],” says Larson. “This shows the importance of educating the legislators about the value of donation.”

Not only are these meetings vital to support the DNA team in its lifesaving mission, but it shows donor families and recipients that they also have the support of Arizona lawmakers.

Governor Doug Ducey spoke out in support of donation and our efforts at the Capitol by tweeting “Donating an organ can save a life. Thanks @DonateLifeAZ for visiting the Capitol today to raise awareness.”

Top left: Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey poses with a Donate Life fan to share on his social media accounts for Donate Life Day at the Capitol.

Middle right: Kellye Pummel and her dog, Ozzy, remember her daughter, organ donor Marissa “Roo” Pummill, as a compassionate animal lover.

Bottom left: Aljandra Robles, a donor mother, shares the donation story of her son, José López, with a reporter from Univisión Arizona.



EMBRACING THE LARGER COMMUNITY

VIRTUALLY ALWAYS CONNECTED

The more than two years under our belt of building human connection through digital platforms have taught us that in-person interaction forges a more intimate bond. There's no escaping that. However, access to the internet has given us all the potential to make this huge, fast-paced world feel a little cozier.

Our donors may live in or visit Arizona often, yet their family and friends could be—and have been—in other states, other countries, even other continents. So, how do we validate their connection to the journey we call the gift of life? We broadcast donation stories to the entire globe.

We called the 2021 Virtual Donor Remembrance “Stars Above” for many reasons, including the fact that when we look up at the night sky, we all see the same moon and stars, no matter where on this planet you may find yourself. We're deeply connected, no matter the distance.

“Stars Above” reached more than 6,100 people in the United States, Mexico, Brazil and Australia in the first month after we streamed it live. That's larger than any in-person event our organization has hosted.

“My husband received a donor heart in September of 2019,” says Deborah Folmar in the comment section of “Stars Above” on YouTube as she watched.

“We do not know the donor's name, but we thank God for the precious gift.”

It's a testament to how organ, eye and tissue donation adds a meaningful way to remember someone we loved and continue to miss.

“We hope tonight's event and celebration is one of those moments,” said Laura Ramos, manager for the Donor Family and Advocate Services department, the night of the event dedicated to donors and their families.

“Those gifts and your support will not be forgotten.”

JOIN US FOR THE NEXT ONE

We hope you'll log on for the next Virtual Donor Remembrance Oct. 1, 2022, streaming live on the @DonateLifeAZ YouTube channel. You can watch the previous Virtual Donor Remembrances on the same YouTube page and share them with your family and friends to learn more about how the gift of life impacts so many people, no matter where they are in the world.

Left: Our team used imagery of sparklers to represent our donor “stars” as an organ recipient read a letter he wrote the parents of his donors.

Right: The Waters, local musicians, play popular music and original songs to help set the stage for a night under the stars to remember our heroes for the 2021 Virtual Donor Remembrance “Stars Above” in July 2021.

SERVING OTHERS BEYOND DONATION

April 2021, also National Donate Life Month, was sure to look different due to COVID-19. But even with the continuing pandemic, generosity led the way.

The generosity of donor heroes and their families saves lives and inspires Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) staff to give back for the greater good. In 2021, DNA's Community Involvement Committee (CIC), accomplished so much. For example, water drives allowed staff to either physically donate water bottles or online through monetary donations. In June 2021, the committee hosted an internal water drive competition. The team donated 12,679 water bottles for Phoenix Rescue Mission to support our homeless and unsheltered neighbors during the hottest months. In April 2022, the committee and staff donated 7,882 more water bottles to Phoenix Rescue Mission again, as well as to Gospel Rescue Mission in Tucson.

The CIC started at DNA in 2015 and has evolved over time. A multicultural pillar was added to the committee's “Children, Veteran and Homeless, and Seniors” pillars in 2018.

CIC has also connected with a new partner, Native American Connections, and focused on improving the lives of indigenous people and families. DNA held its first clothing drive for Native American Connections in November 2021. The drive amounted to approximately 20 boxes of gently used clothing and shoes, along with 20 packages

of new underwear and socks. A second round of donations in March 2022 generated a mix of 12 large bags and boxes of clothing, 66 family size bottles of sunscreen, and a box of toiletries.

DNA employees also supported other initiatives, such as the Pappas Kids Schoolhouse Foundation backpack drive in July 2021. Staff members gave a backpack stuffed with school supplies for the school year to 82 children.

DNA's Angel Tree during the holidays collected items for more than 60 children, including more than 14 bicycles, scooters and skateboards. Every kid who requested one received one, and Arizona Children's Association had to use two large vans for pick up!

DNA employees make the most of life through the gifts of organ and tissue donation and go beyond their lifesaving work to contribute to their communities in multiple ways.

“In such a unique time of need, staff continue to give back beyond their work in donation. The committee is happy to extend a huge thank you to everyone at DNA for taking our community outreach far and wide,” says Katie Benton, CIC co-leader.

Top left: A peek at only a fraction of the food the CIC collected to donate to support food security in our state.

Top right: The Donate Life van gets packed with boxes and bags of gently used clothing, new underwear and toiletries for Native American Connections.

Bottom: Pappas Kids Schoolhouse Foundation received 82 backpacks stuffed with school supplies to help children of underserved communities get prepared for a new school year.

BRIANA RODRIGUEZ

HOME IS WHERE THE DONATED HEART IS

Julia Jones is not Latina, but through her lifesaving organ transplant, she has the heart of one that beats rigorously inside her chest. Her donor's family learned that firsthand after they had the chance to listen to it pulse with life.

"Healthy heart," said Reyna Rodriguez, Briana Rodriguez's mother, with a stethoscope in her ears and her hand on Jones' chest. "It is a healthy heart for sure." The donor, Briana, passed away in April 2013 at only 15 years old after an ATV accident.

"We went up to Pine Top for Easter, and that's when she, unfortunately, lost her life in a rollover," Reyna says.

Just shy of a decade later, Reyna and her entire family received Jones like family in their South Phoenix home for a homecoming of sorts. Complete strangers suddenly becoming family because of the gift of life bringing two of Briana's recipients together with Briana's loved ones.

Vance Tennyson, Briana's kidney recipient, spent seven years on dialysis when he got a call in 2013 and learned he matched a kidney donation.

"What Briana did for me was, she put me back together. It really did," Tennyson says. "You look at everything like it's brand new because it is. Every day is a gift. Nobody's promised tomorrow, and through unfortunate circumstances, I still get to be here."

Paying it forward

The Rodriguez family is no stranger to organ transplantation. Briana's grandfather previously received a kidney transplant. For that reason, her mom always emphasized the impact of registering as a donor. One month before Briana passed away, Briana made the decision to help others when her time on Earth was done.

"Such a giving act in her last days, and it is crazy to think that she is not here, but I am so thankful for all of that," says Jones, remembering how she was just 13 years old when her family received a call that there was a matching heart for her.

Now at 21, receiving red roses from each of her donor's family members in February 2022, and letting each family member listen to Briana's heartbeat inside her, Jones studies at UCLA and plans to go into the medical field to help other people and try to make Briana proud.

"The bond is going to be there no matter what," Reyna says, letting Jones know that in the Rodriguez house, she's at home.

Difficult conversations

Since her daughter's passing, Reyna has been working to clear up misconceptions about donation, especially in the Latino community where sometimes fear or mistrust keep people from saying yes to the gift of life.

"Such
a giving
act in her
last days ..."

JULIA JONES
BRIANA'S HEART RECIPIENT



“WHETHER IT WAS TISSUE, KIDNEY OR HEART TRANSPLANT, I GOT TO MEET AT LEAST THREE OF THOSE ORGAN RECIPIENTS. MY ANGEL SAVED A LOT OF LIVES.” REYNA RODRIGUEZ (L) DONOR MOTHER, PICTURED HERE WITH HER DAUGHTER’S HEART RECIPIENT, JULIA JONES (R)

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Register as an organ, eye and tissue
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