



Arizona

THE CONNECTION

A YEAR IN REVIEW

WE MAKE THE MOST OF LIFE

JUNE 2020 - MAY 2021

Cover: The Donate Life flag flies in the wind at Donor Network of Arizona headquarters in Tempe for a statewide flag-raising virtual event April 12, 2021.

Below: Kimberly Ochoa, kidney and pancreas recipient (right), and Minjeong Kim, donor sister (left), hold a photo of Yuna Kim, the donor who saved Ochoa's life.

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GREETINGS

FROM TIM BROWN, PRESIDENT AND CEO

It's common to hear people say, "COVID has changed everything." It's mostly true. However, in our line of work, there is at least one thing that comes to mind that hasn't changed in this global health emergency.

With masks, social distancing, hospital visitation limitations and overwhelmed ERs, the health care setting has been more complex for families suffering the loss of a loved one than ever before. Despite this, Arizona donors and their families have not hesitated to extend generosity to complete strangers in need.

During the last pandemic, the 1918 influenza, organ donation didn't exist. So, we had no way to predict how COVID-19 would challenge Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) and others who work in donation for transplantation.

In 2020 and 2021, we've seen how the new coronavirus tested the endurance of medical professionals across the state. Roughly 40% of DNA staff were sent to work primarily from home for more than a year. Tissue and ocular recovery declined because of fewer elective surgeries. Dozens of potential donors were deferred from donation because of a positive COVID-19 test. And it drastically limited opportunities for more Arizonans to join the DonateLifeAZ Registry. It has taken an emotional toll on all of us as humans beings, but that's exactly what kept the gift of life going.

When we remember we are all only human, yet that we have the power to save and heal other people by saying yes to donation, it really puts things into perspective. Arizonans have done just that for many years and particularly in this global pandemic.

That continues to humble me every day, and it makes me proud to lead DNA. Thank you to everyone who supports DNA and its mission to save and heal lives.

Tim Brown, DNA president and CEO, prepares for the Donate Life Arizona Virtual Flag-Raising event in April for National Donate Life Month 2021.

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

MALAYA SOARES

LOVE COMES FROM THE (DONATED) HEART

At only 4 years old, Malaya Soares knows two important things—1. how to pose for the camera, and 2. where her “beautiful heart” is, the donated one that saved her life.

Soares has been through more in her four years than many will experience throughout their entire lives. She was born with a heart condition that prevented proper blood flow. But, for better or worse, Soares was not alone in her battle.

“My original diagnosis was viral dilated cardiomyopathy,” says Soares’ mother, Mia Welch, about her own health battles from almost a decade ago. “Because they thought it was a virus, the doctors told me I didn’t have to worry about my kids getting it.”

Welch received her lifesaving heart donation in 2012. She’s even been in contact with her donor’s family and lives a healthy, fulfilling life. She thought the biggest battles were behind her. Almost four years ago, Welch took her daughter, only 5 months old, to the emergency room. Doctors told her that her infant was in heart failure.

“It turns out we have the same exact mutated gene,” Welch says about Soares’ identical diagnosis.

When someone’s heart stops working, doctors must work quickly. The team at Phoenix Children’s Hospital was able to add Soares to the national organ waiting list.

“She was listed for transplant for 14 days,” the longest two weeks of her life, Welch says.

Further tightening the mother-daughter bond, Soares got her donated heart on the birthday of Welch’s own heart donor.

A ROYAL SURPRISE

“Ariel!” Soares said with a simultaneous gasp. Standing in front of her house, she watched as Princess Ariel from “The Little Mermaid” walked around the corner for a surprise visit with her biggest fan in March 2021.

Gifted her own tiara and crowned Princess Malaya of the Kingdom of Rainbows and Unicorns, Ariel spent the socially-distanced hour reading stories, singing songs, and teaching the new princess how to wave to her fans—all of Soares’ favorite activities.

“I want the donor’s family to know Malaya loves to sing and dance, and she has this feisty, sassy personality,” which Welch thinks helped her toddler face the next fight.

Soares was diagnosed with post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorder (PTLD). PTLD, essentially cancer, is a rare and life-threatening complication after an organ transplant. But with a sparkly tiara, a bright smile and a personality to match, Soares underwent chemotherapy and steroid treatments. In May 2021, Soares celebrated being cancer free. Her mother hopes to one day tell Soares’ donor family that they’re taking good care of their gifts of life.

“Ten years ago,
I didn’t know
anything about
donation. And
now I don’t know
how many people
who have told me
they’re donors now
because of me
and Malaya.”

MIA WELCH, HEART RECIPIENT, MALAYA’S MOTHER



CONNECTING WITH DONOR FAMILIES DURING COVID-19

COVID-19 affected nearly every facet of the work Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) does, yet we knew we could not press pause on honoring the selflessness of donors and their families.

Talking to families and health care professionals is meaningful and delicate work. During the pandemic, these conversations dramatically increased with the heightened circumstances.

With the widespread disease claiming so many lives, DNA’s Referral and Donor Screening Services (RDSS) department received 13,900 more hospital death referrals between March 2020 to March 2021 compared to the same time frame between 2019-2020.

“I would say the hardest part is really having to navigate with so many health care professionals who themselves are exhausted,” says Marisol Diaz, a donor support coordinator.

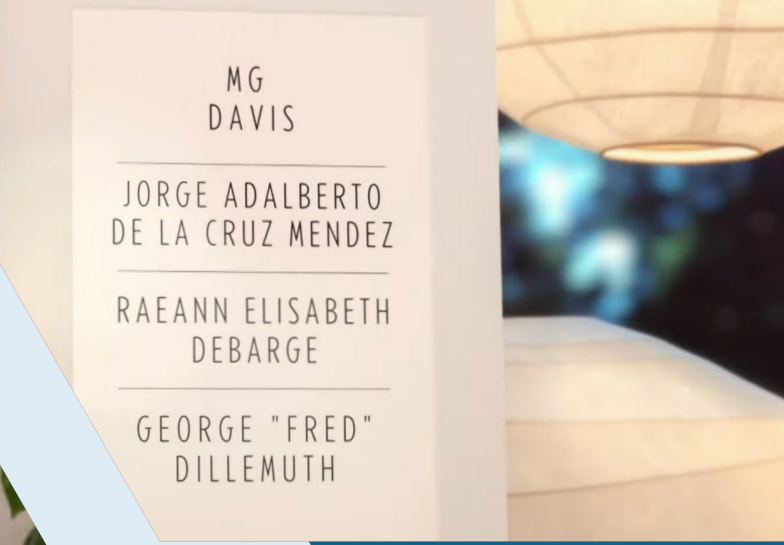
In 2020, active and suspected COVID-19 infection ruled out potential donors. Another difficult impact in the realm of organ donation has been hospital visitation limitations and other restrictions that changed DNA’s ability to meet with donor families in person to walk them through the loss of a loved one.

“All of us who talk to [donor] families would say that being present for them in this crisis time of their lives is one of the most important things that we do,” says PJ Geraghty, DNA vice president of Clinical Services.

As the vaccine rollout continues in Arizona and the U.S., the DNA team has slowly started to reincorporate this face-to-face element by meeting with families to explain personally how their loved ones are heroes for sharing such a gift when donation is possible.

Honoring families is at the center of DNA’s work, whether through conversations or events. In what is normally a large in-person event, hundreds also gathered around their smart devices for a virtual donor remembrance event Nov. 14, 2020, to remember loved ones who offered the gift of life. The event, called Illuminating Generosity, had all the elements needed: a theme, musicians, heartfelt messages, stories of people touched by organ, eye and tissue donation, and honoring donor heroes.

Opposite Page: Screen captures of DNA’s first virtual donor remembrance, Illuminating Generosity, honoring Arizona donors and their families for their selflessness and generosity.



JOIN US

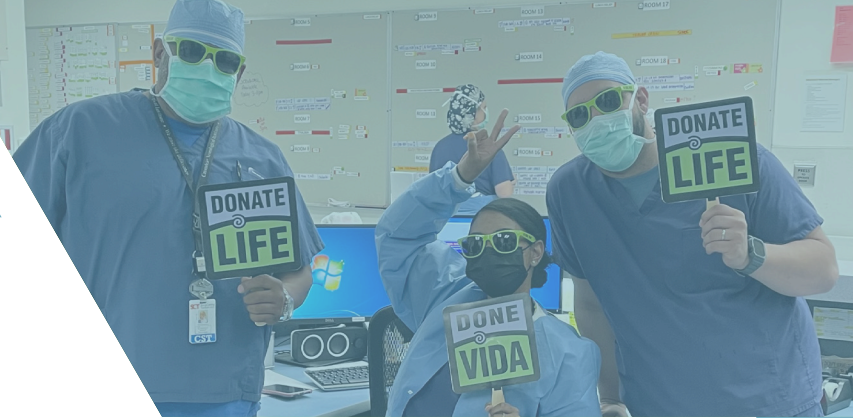
The next virtual donor remembrance “Stars Above” will be July 31, 2021. You can receive notifications to watch the YouTube Premiere presentation by subscribing to the Donate Life Arizona YouTube page at YouTube.com/DonateLifeAZ or searching DonateLifeAZ in the YouTube app. You can also watch last year’s virtual event on the same page.

Save the Date: July 31 at 7 p.m.



CONNECTIONS TO MAKE AN IMPACT

June 2020 -
May 2021



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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

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

399k ARIZONANS REACHED
across DonateLifeAZ social media platforms.

1.09k MEDIA STORIES
mentioned donation in Arizona.



THE GIFT OF DONATION

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

838 CORNEA DONORS
restored sight to others.

1,724 TISSUE DONORS
gave the gift of healing.

420 HEART VALVE DONORS
saved lives.



SHARING HOPE

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

15,600 LETTERS MAILED
to provide comfort and correspondence.

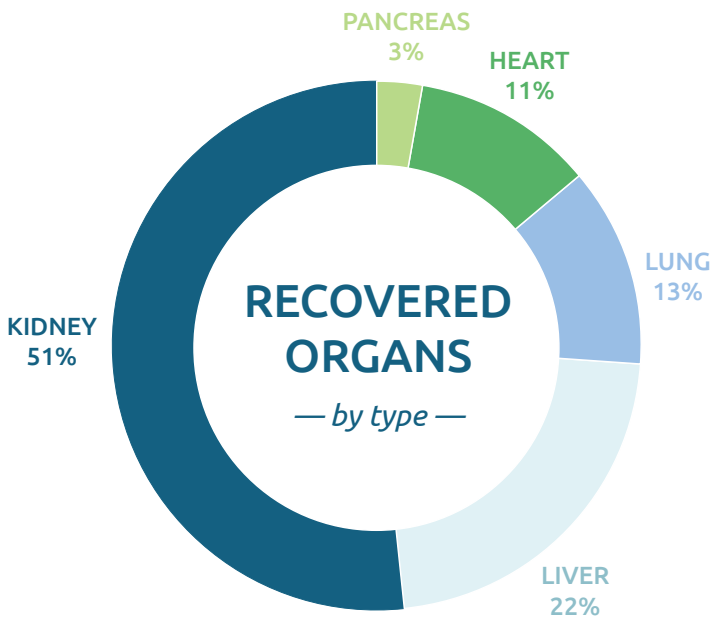
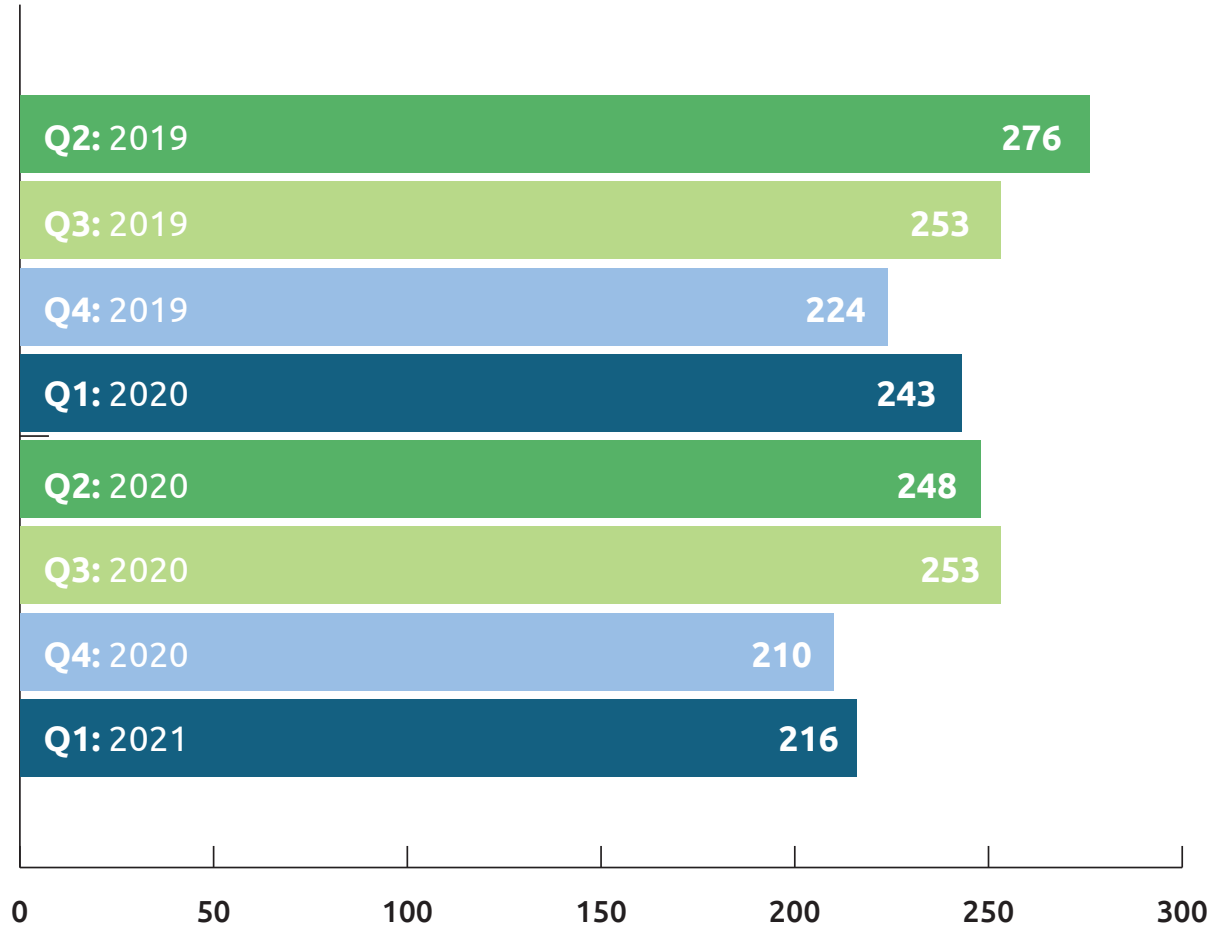
199 ORGAN DONORS
who registered their decision gave the gift of life.

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

DONATION BY THE NUMBERS

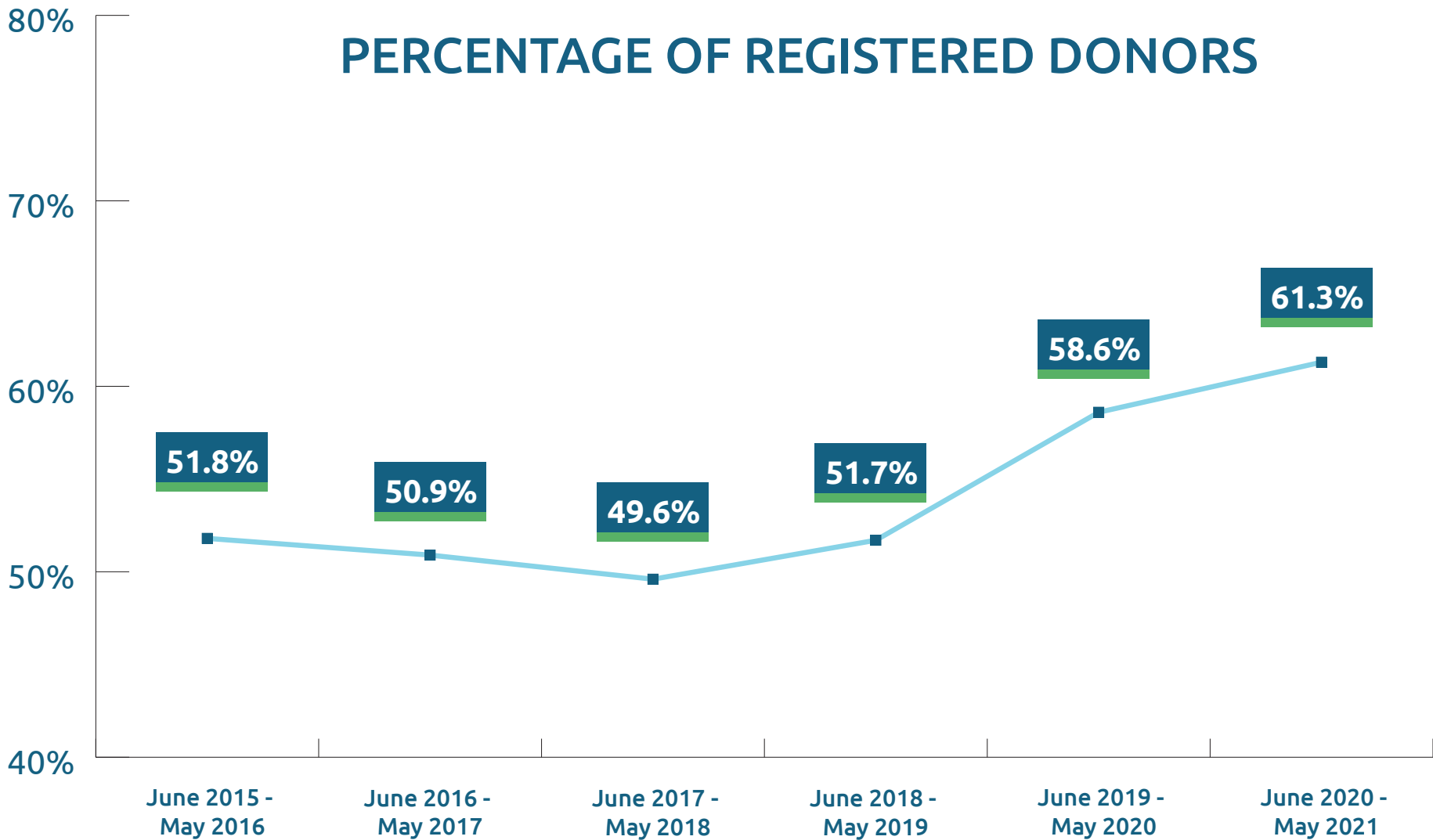
**Reflects data from June 2020 to May 2021*

ORGANS TRANSPLANTED



63% OF ORGANS RECOVERED IN ARIZONA WERE TRANSPLANTED IN ARIZONA

PERCENTAGE OF REGISTERED DONORS



UNITING HEARTS TO SAVE MORE LIVES

THE HEART IN PEDIATRIC TRANSPLANTATION

In a year that challenged organ, eye and tissue donation operations, Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) set a national record with the highest number of heart valve donors for a single organization. In 2020, 390 generous tissue donors gave the gift of heart valves—surpassing 2019’s number of donors by nearly 100.

It takes a collaboration through DNA’s Referral and Donor Screening Services, Tissue Services and partners, such as the Office of the Medical Examiner, to recover these lifesaving tissues and continue to decrease the waitlist for those in need.

Heart valves are a small tissue that make a huge impact—mainly saving children. More than 75% of donated heart valves are transplanted into pediatric patients to save their lives. While anyone could potentially need a heart valve transplant due to infection, congenital abnormality or other factors, “heart valves primarily go to children, women of child-bearing age, and those who live an active lifestyle,” says Ryan Nelson, supervisor of Tissue Services at DNA.

There are other options for heart valve transplants, such as mechanical and animal-derived, but human-donated heart valves are preferred for these groups because they do not require the recipient to take blood thinners, and they help to fight infections in the heart. However, across the United States, there is a

waiting list of 800 heart valves, with 700 of those being for pediatric patients.

DNA recovers aortic and pulmonary valves, and it’s not only from pediatric donors. Donors up to 60 years old currently have the potential to donate heart valves that could end up saving a pediatric patient, since it’s based on size of the heart and valves rather than the age of the donor.

Scott Eisenfeld was one of those donors. Scott passed away in 2013 at 52 while training for El Tour de Tucson, an annual cycling fundraiser.

“He was a very healthy, active guy, riding his bicycle 40 or 50 miles a day during training,” says Scott’s wife, Christine. On Sept. 15, 2013, Scott fell off his bike during a training session and never regained consciousness.

Christine said Scott was passionate about donation and knew how important it was to save and heal others. He talked about it with his family and had the donor heart insignia on his driver’s license. After he died, Scott donated his heart valves. Several months later, his family learned one of his donated heart valves went to a 4-year-old boy in California.

“It was so comforting to know that,” says Christine, recalling when she learned about Scott’s donated gifts. “Tissue donation is so important.”

Left: Tyler, Kaitlin and Christine Eisenfeld find comfort in the fact that Scott lives on in others through his generous gift.

Right: Scott Eisenfeld was training for an annual cycling fundraiser when he passed away. His heart valve donation helped a 4-year-old boy.

ADOT MVD: A LIFESAVING PARTNERSHIP

Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) is grateful every day for the positive and collaborative nature of its relationship with Arizona Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Division (ADOT MVD).

More than 95% of donor registrations occur when an individual obtains or renews a driver’s license or state ID. Under ADOT MVD’s current leadership, the number of Arizonans registered to donate has doubled since 2014, reaching more than 4 million registered donors in 2020. And last year, 60% of Arizona’s 311 organ donors were signed up in the DonateLifeAZ Registry.

When the pandemic hit, ADOT MVD took swift action to protect visitors and staff alike by reducing the number of customers allowed inside their offices. Nearly all transactions required an appointment. As foot traffic at ADOT MVD offices plummeted, so did new donor registrations.

The public relied even more heavily on authorized third-party offices (ATPs). ATPs are privately owned businesses authorized by the Arizona government to issue state driver’s licenses, IDs, titles and registrations. There are roughly the same number of ATPs operating across Arizona as there are state-run MVDs, potentially doubling the opportunities to educate the public about donation.

In the summer of 2020, DNA became an associate level member of the Motor Vehicle Providers Association (MVPA). The association advocates for ATPs. Joining the MVPA gave DNA the ability to

engage more directly with owners, managers and employees.

Our new membership commenced as ADOT MVD Saves Lives Month kicked off in August 2020, and we enjoyed helping ATPs see themselves as heroes to transplant recipients and donor families. ATPs received thank you cards with handwritten messages of hope and appreciation from our volunteers along with baseball inspired T-shirts celebrating donation.

For National Donor Day (Feb. 14, 2021), DNA invited employees of ADOT MVDs and ATPs to show their support for the 108,000 people on the national organ waiting list by participating in a cookie decorating contest. DNA shared copies of the Donate Life Arizona *Recipes of Remembrance* cookbook and sent hundreds of Reggie (cactus) shaped cookie cutters to over 100 offices. The response was so much sweeter than our expectations! In addition to receiving a celebratory lunch, Reggie the Donor Cactus, our mascot, paid each of the winning offices a personal visit.

DNA’s partnership with ADOT MVD and ATPs is nothing short of lifesaving!

Photos: Teams from the Tempe ADOT MVD office (left) and ATP office MMS Pacific (right) pose with Reggie the Donor Cactus after winning the cactus cookie decorating contest (bottom) for National Donor Day, Feb. 14, 2021.

CONSTRUCTING HOPE

A new home for Arizona organ, eye and tissue donation

Fall 2020—even during a global health crisis—marked a change for Donor Network of Arizona (DNA). DNA officially moved to a new building in Tempe, and this location has already and will continue to improve our ability to make the most of life.

“In my almost three decades as DNA’s chief financial officer, we hadn’t invested in the organization’s physical infrastructure in any significant way until now,” says DNA CFO Kathy Mills. “We wanted to create a space designed around the flow of our clinical and support processes that provided state-of-the-art technology and allowed for growth to enhance productivity for this vital work.”

The team’s work is streamlined to save and heal even more lives with multiple elements including the human leukocyte antigen (HLA) lab. This lab, which was previously housed at an separate location, performs crossmatching to identify potential recipients of donated organs.

“The HLA laboratory is now literally a part of DNA, sharing a physical space for the first time after several years,” says Abdur Rahman, director of HLA. “The

layout and resources support the lab’s role in DNA’s mission.”

By June 2021, roughly 60% of the DNA staff was working primarily at the new office location or off-site representing DNA in ways similar to pre-COVID-19 times. The rest of the team whose essential work could be completed from home started to phase back into working at the office as well.

“Our new home offers us the ability to continue to improve donation opportunities with updated technology and space designed specifically for our needs,” says Dan Meyer, director of Quality and Regulatory Affairs, whose role is to make sure our team does everything competently and correctly every time.

The new hub also invites the community to utilize the space to promote exposure to donation, honor donors and their families, and to remind Arizona of the ongoing need for lifesaving and healing donation.

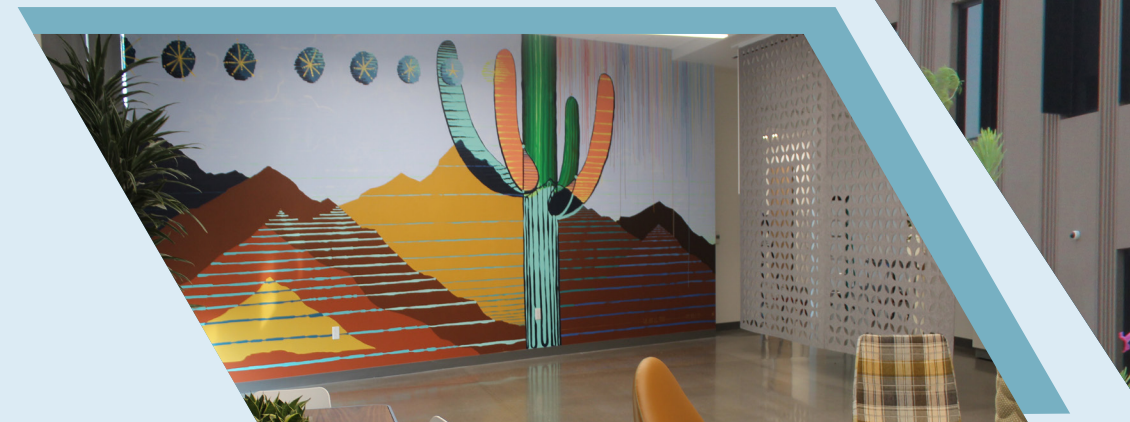
“I hope that the public will take away a sense of ownership, hope, and most

importantly, comfort when they enter our space,” says Roland Palomino, Supplies and Facilities manager.

“We found during various engagement sessions and a Living Office workshop with Herman Miller (a global furniture and strategy company) that employees were simply restricted by their [previous] environment,” says Scott Steffes, an interior designer with Shepley Bullfinch who worked with DNA. “They were eager to better understand their colleagues’ roles and better support each other in various ways. Collaboration here meant knowledge, awareness, connection and equity.”

With this new building, we reaffirm our commitment as a vital link in donation for transplantation and to always honor our donor heroes. As such donation continues to grow across the nation and within our state, DNA will also expand its potential to save even more lives. Looking forward, the new home supports DNA’s long-term strategic plan to add 100 new jobs, supported by an increase in flexible workspace.

Photos: From fresh greenery to meaningful donor tributes, DNA’s new office was built to invite reflection and renewal, all while providing a more effective space in which to save and heal through donation and transplantation.



DIGITAL AVENUES OF GENEROSITY

AMPLIFYING MULTICULTURAL VOICES

While multicultural communities have been greatly affected by COVID-19, education efforts on organ, eye and tissue donation with diverse communities in Arizona continued with unity and adaptation.

“We knew we had to continue to offer education and advocate for multicultural communities, particularly because they are disproportionately impacted by the need for organ donations and distrust in our country’s health care system,” says Lesley Rodriguez, multicultural outreach coordinator at Donor Network of Arizona (DNA).

As the lead of DNA’s Multicultural Committee, Rodriguez works with committee members focused on reaching out to multicultural communities about organ, eye and tissue donation. This year, they turned to online events across different virtual platforms in place of in-person events.

DNA created original virtual events to amplify the voices of these same communities. On Aug. 8, 2020, the Café con Pan chat hosted Spanish-speaking donor families and Done Vida Arizona volunteers on a recorded videoconference to debunk misconceptions through sharing the stories of their experiences with organ, eye and tissue donation on the Done Vida Arizona Facebook page.

In the same vein, “Saving Black Lives through Organ Donation” was a Facebook Watch Party panel discussion Aug. 31, 2020, to specifically address organ

donation within Black communities. It included the unique view of a Baptist organ recipient who is also the mother of a donor, a medical professional’s input on health disparities, and donation facts addressed by DNA staff. This effort was followed up with a Black History Month 2021 video, celebrating Black heritage and the importance of organ donation and transplantation outreach in Black communities.

Other events in August 2020 included a Haiku contest in appreciation of Asian heritage contributions, and bilingual Lotería (a Bingo-like game popular in many Latin American countries) created for everyone using donation information specific to Latinx cultures. DNA also hosted Done Vida 101, a short lesson on common Spanish phrases about donation for English-speaking volunteers wanting to learn and practice.

“The brief Spanish lesson was well received, and we presented on this outreach effort on a national level to invite other organ procurement organizations to constantly try new things,” Rodriguez says.

Left: Dr. Dana Jamison—orthopedic surgeon, kidney recipient and DNA Multicultural Committee member—stands with her husband, Alex Jamison, who saved her life as her living donor.

Right: DNA employees and members of the Multicultural Committee host a discussion panel called “Saving Black Lives through Organ Donation” in August 2020 for National Multicultural Donation Awareness Month.

VIRTUAL CELEBRATIONS

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.

More than 65 hospitals, health care organizations and community partners joined together to make this past April a success.

Activities included virtual or safe ways to share the donation message and inspire more Arizonans to choose donation. Together with our community partners, 120 social media posts were shared on platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. Donate Life Arizona also hosted a Q&A panel discussing why doctors will not let you die if you’re a registered organ donor; a volunteer appreciation day; and Blue & Green Day, a day to rock donation colors, making for at least one virtual event each week. Overall, more than 700 people registered and reaffirmed their decision to be organ, eye and tissue donors and hundreds more participated in Donate Life Arizona virtual events.

On April 12, hospitals and community partners around the state raised the Donate Life flag together while watching a Facebook Live with Donate Life Arizona. This symbol gives hope to those on the national organ waiting list and honors donors and their generosity.

Jennifer Valente Caywood, as an organ recipient and a donor family member, watched the Donate Life Arizona Flag-Raising Facebook Live and

submitted a video message about it. She says she is truly moved every time she sees the Donate Life flag waving in the wind.

“When I see the flag flying over the hospital for Donate Life, I know that other families are being impacted,” she says, “and I am just so grateful to see that.”

April 30 is National Donor Remembrance Day. For the second year in a row, Donate Life Arizona held a virtual event to honor organ, eye and tissue donors. This year Cori Hutchison, the mother of donor Will Hutchison, 2, who passed away from complications of a vascular disorder, joined a Facebook Watch Party to share a special memory.

“Will’s recipients—I love them like family so much, and I haven’t even met them,” Cori says about the loss of her 2-year-old son who saved and healed others through donation. “I just love that kid so much. We miss him.”

The recording of these events and more can all be viewed on the Donate Life Arizona Facebook and YouTube pages by searching @DonateLifeAZ. Hope shone brightly in April, and certainly that light continues to glow from everyone’s efforts during Donate Life Month.

Left: DNA employees and Donate Life Arizona volunteers propped up yard signs to show their donation pride for National Donate Life Month in April 2021.

Right: Security personnel help with a statewide Donate Life Arizona Flag-Raising event at Banner – University Medical Center Tucson April 12, 2021.

Bottom: The mother of 2-year-old donor Will Hutchison featured him in the first edition of the Donate Life Arizona *Recipes of Remembrance* with an “ah-cado” toast recipe.

YUNA KIM

SAVING LIVES ACROSS THE WORLD

Organ donation connected two families from across the world after Yuna Kim, an organ donor, gave Kimberly Ochoa the gift of life in 2017.

Yuna, 19, came to Arizona as an exchange student from South Korea. She passed away after a car crash while here. Her family, in contact with Donor Network of Arizona (DNA) through a phone translation service, authorized the recovery of lifesaving and life-healing gifts, giving Ochoa a second chance with a kidney and pancreas transplant.

“All I could say was thank you for giving me a second chance,” Ochoa says, explaining she had type 1 diabetes since she was 2 years old. Eventually her kidney function plummeted.

Years after her transplant, Ochoa heard from her donor’s parents by mail. Ochoa and her family live in El Paso, Texas. They traveled to South Korea in January 2020 where the public, the media and more importantly, Yuna’s family, greeted them with open arms. Both families—now unexpectedly united forever because Yuna saved Ochoa’s life.

Ochoa had never traveled outside of the U.S., and a trip to South Korea to meet her donor family was shocking and amazing at the same time, she says. While in South Korea, Yuna’s family took Ochoa to visit Yuna’s favorite beach. She describes it as a serene moment where Ochoa felt she was able to connect with her donor.

“She was there with us,” Ochoa says.

Yuna’s sister, Minjeong “Min” Kim, survived the crash that claimed Yuna’s life. She also studies at Arizona State University as an exchange student majoring in film and media. Having missed the trip to South Korea, Min met her sister’s recipient for the first time at DNA in Tempe for an emotional reunion May 18, 2021.

“Now her family is our family,” Ochoa says. “We can’t wait to go to her graduation and take her to Texas for a big party with the whole family.”

Before Ochoa’s transplant, she began to give up on herself as she feared the worst while waiting for a transplant to leave dialysis in the past. But now, with her second chance, she wants to keep her donor’s legacy alive by sharing Yuna’s story and honoring her family more than 6,500 miles away.

“Even though they’re far away, I feel like they’re with us,” Ochoa says.

The Ochoa family surprised Min with photos from their trip to South Korea and a photo album of the Kim family. Min was moved to tears by the gifts and said the gifts were too much, but Ochoa’s mother said it was a small gesture in comparison to the gift her family had received.

“All I could say
was thank you
for giving me
a second chance.”

KIMBERLY OCHOA (R),
KIDNEY AND PANCREAS RECIPIENT

MINJEONG KIM (L),
DONOR SISTER



An American flag and a Donate Life Arizona flag are flying on a tall pole against a clear blue sky. The American flag is positioned higher and further to the left, while the Donate Life Arizona flag is lower and further to the right. The background of the entire image is a solid blue color.

"THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME TO SHARE WILLIAM'S STORY.
THE DONATE LIFE [ARIZONA] TEAM HAS SOME OF THE MOST
COMPASSIONATE AND LOVING HUMANS—TRULY YOU ALL ARE JUST
SO WONDERFUL." CORI HUTCHISON, DONOR MOTHER

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Register as an organ, eye and tissue
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