excellence in action

jeremy weyandt
double lung recipient

2019 annual report
Looking back over 2019, we can say with great confidence that it has been a year full of excellence and a continued commitment to our life-saving mission. 2019 marked a record-breaking year for Saving and Healing lives in western Pennsylvania and West Virginia through organ, tissue and cornea donation; a true reflection of our commitment to excellence. Because of the generosity of 253 selfless donors and the collaboration of more than 140 hospital partners and seven transplant centers, CORE made possible 661 life-saving organ transplants, an increase of nearly 10% over 2018.

Our commitment to excellence was further reflected when our life-saving work was recognized with the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, a Presidential-level honor and the highest recognition for performance excellence in the nation. Being honored with this prestigious award was a testament to our dedication to Saving and Healing lives, and relentless drive to innovate and integrate programs that set the standard for exceptional, compassionate service in organ procurement.

In 2019, we further fostered a culture of donation within the communities and hospitals that we serve in western Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Notably, life-saving legislation was passed in West Virginia, adding the option to register as an organ donor to hunting and fishing license applications across the state. We also encouraged organ donation registration across our designated service area throughout the year, including during National Donate Life Month in April.

With each year that passes, our priority remains the same: honoring our donors, their families, and their life-saving gifts. We paid tribute to our donors at the Pennsylvania and West Virginia A Special Place ceremonies, helped to unveil another hospital donor memorial, and provided ongoing support to our donor families, honoring their loved ones and offering comfort throughout the bereavement process.

We are tremendously proud of the accomplishments achieved in 2019. As we set our sights on 2020, we are recommitting to our mission to Save and Heal lives through organ, tissue and cornea donation. This next decade will be one of continued innovation and excellence as we work together to deliver the gift of hope to the 2,500 people in western Pennsylvania and West Virginia who are waiting for life-saving transplants.

Thank you,
2019 Statistics

We Saved & Healed more than 80,000 lives last year.

- 384 kidneys transplanted (14% increase from 2018)
- 760 corneas transplanted
- 1,123 tissue donors (4% increase from 2018)
- 75 hearts transplanted (9% increase from 2018)
- 140 hospital partners
- 7 transplant centers

661 life-saving organ transplants made possible by CORE in 2019 (9% increase over 2018)

253 organ donors gave the gift of life in 2019 (9% increase over 2018)

2019 financial data

- 43% salaries & contracted services
- 23% pass through charter service expenses
- 9% employee benefits
- 8% medical supplies
- 5% occupancy expenses
- 4% office expenses & equipment
- 2% staff expenses
- 1% legal, professional & insurance expenses

Organ acquisition fees

We Saved more than 66 life-saving organ transplants made possible by CORE in 2019 (9% increase over 2018)

Organ donors gave the gift of life in 2019 (9% increase over 2018)

1,123 tissue donors (4% increase from 2018)

75 hearts transplanted (9% increase from 2018)

140 hospital partners

7 transplant centers
In 2019, CORE was named a winner of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award by U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross. A Presidential-level honor, the award recognizes exemplary U.S. organizations and businesses that demonstrate an “unceasing drive for innovative solutions to complex challenges, visionary leadership and operational excellence.”

The Baldrige Award is the highest level of national recognition for performance excellence that a U.S. organization can receive. Named after Malcolm Baldrige, the 26th Secretary of Commerce, the Baldrige Award was established by Congress in 1987 to enhance the competitiveness and performance of U.S. businesses. CORE is one of only five Pennsylvania and two West Virginia organizations ever to receive the honor in its more than 30-year history.

For CORE, the award is the result of a near decade-long performance excellence journey focused on the satisfaction of four key groups: donor families, transplant centers, corneal transplant surgeons, and tissue processors. The Baldrige designation is a testament to CORE’s dedication to its mission to Save and Heal lives through donation. It’s a showcase of CORE’s values and proof that CORE is changing the lives of grieving donor families, courageous recipients and those holding out hope for a life-saving transplant.

Through its relentless drive to innovate and integrate programs and best practices, CORE has maintained performance among the top 10% of the nation’s 58 organ procurement organizations, and as the result of managing the costs, efficiency and effectiveness of operations, including two on-site operating rooms and research laboratories, CORE achieved cost savings of over $300,000 in 2014, over $600,000 in 2018 and over $2.6 million to date.

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CORE is recognized for its unceasing drive for innovative solutions to complex challenges, visionary leadership and operational excellence.

CORE celebrates this recognition with all of those who have contributed to this achievement. Together with the collaboration of hospital partners, transplant centers, legislators, the CORE board of directors and advisory board, workforce and volunteers, substantial, life-saving contributions are made every single day. This achievement is also a testament to CORE’s donors and their families, and is an acknowledgment of their life-saving and healing gifts.

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the highest level of national recognition for performance excellence that a U.S. organization can receive.
Diagnosed with a serious heart disorder called dilated cardiomyopathy, baby Quinn Santini was placed on the waiting list for a life-saving heart transplant at just 2 weeks old. She became more ill with each week of her young life. Quinn’s heart rate skyrocketed, she experienced lack of movement in her arms and legs, and she required endless amounts of emergency medicine. After many late nights, tears and prayers, the Santini’s lives were changed forever when a heart became available due to the selfless choice that a donor family made in their darkest hour. After baby Quinn’s transplant surgery, her life improved quickly. Because of the generosity of the donor family, Quinn, who is now 2 years old, continues to grow each day and has mastered many developmental milestones, including taking her first steps.
Every April, CORE recognizes National Donate Life Month alongside our hospital partners, public officials, law enforcement officers, small business owners, faith leaders and community members of western Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Together, we reinforce the life-saving and life-affirming gifts of organ, tissue and cornea donation, and honor those generous donors who offer the gift of life and inspire people to say “yes” to donation.

In celebration of National Donate Life Month and as part of the 2019 Donate Life Hospital Challenges in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, CORE coordinated hundreds of awareness events across our service area. Throughout the month, CORE partnered with hospitals for Donate Life flag raisings; organized four recipient – donor family meetings; and participated in two light-up ceremonies, a handful of donor memorial ceremonies, two baseball game commemorations, two rose garden ceremonies, two 5K runs, one Celebration of Life ceremony, and one living donor recognition luncheon. This doesn’t include the countless information tables organized to raise awareness and register donors across western Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Western Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania State Representative Tim O’Neal, who represents the 48th Legislative District in the House of Representatives, which serves parts of Washington County, set the stage for Donate Life Month by issuing a Donate Life Month proclamation for Pennsylvania in Harrisburg. Teenage liver recipient Aubrey Mueller was at his side, making the commemoration particularly meaningful.

On National Blue and Green Day, April 12, CORE kicked off #PGHGoesBlueAndGreen, a localized initiative to encourage residents in western Pennsylvania to give the gift of life by registering as organ donors. That same day, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto issued an official proclamation emphasizing the importance of organ donation together with donors, recipients and leaders from the city’s largest hospitals in attendance. Adding to the day’s celebration, CORE teamed up with the Carnegie Science Center during Donate Life Month to premiere the first-ever Pittsburgh screening of the award-winning documentary Burden of Genius: Dr. Thomas Starzl’s Journey into Organ Transplantation. The film highlights the magnificent journey of the legendary Pittsburgher Dr. Thomas E. Starzl, who made history by performing the world’s first successful liver transplant in 1967 and Dr. Starzl perfected the procedure at the University of Pittsburgh in 1981. Following each of the five showings, which ran through April 18, a number of local transplant recipients, donor families and medical experts served as guest speakers to further educate the community on organ donation.

Throughout Donate Life Month, the City County building, the Highmark building, the Koppers building, the Gulf Tower and the Allegheny County Courthouse all showed their support by lighting up the city blue and green.

Further celebrating National Donate Life Month, CORE’s hospital and community partners in western Pennsylvania, including UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh, Allegheny General Hospital, UPMC Presbyterian, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center and PNC Park also hosted a total of nine events to commemorate and celebrate those who have saved lives through the gift of donation.

West Virginia

In West Virginia, several of CORE’s hospital partners across the state commemorated the month with special events to raise awareness and honor those who saved and healed lives. To kick things off, Charleston Mayor Amy Goodwin and Kent Carper joined CORE Advocates to issue an official proclamation to recognize the importance of organ donation in Kanawha County.

National Donate Life Month also marked the unveiling of a donor memorial wall at WVU Medicine J.W. Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown. CORE leadership joined in a ceremonial unveiling of the wall, which is dedicated to all individuals who have given the gift of life through organ, tissue or cornea donation.

WVU Medicine J.W. Ruby Memorial Hospital is now among the many hospitals that CORE serves who honor donors through commemorative walls, including Allegheny General Hospital, UPMC Presbyterian, CAMC General Hospital, Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center, Meadville Medical Center, Stonewall Jackson Memorial Hospital and Thomas Memorial Hospital.

Core Promotes Importance of Organ Donation During National Donate Life Month

“to

celebrate

those who have

saved lives.”

Gift of Life
Known for his larger-than-life personality and even bigger heart, Eli Bussotti was a typical 17-year-old student at Highlands High School finishing up his senior year. Described as kind and compassionate, it’s no surprise that Eli made the selfless decision to register as an organ donor shortly before he tragically lost his life in a car accident. Eli’s heroic decision helped save eight lives across the United States, including Chad Ravotti, who happened to live just five miles away. While Eli’s contagious smile will never be matched and the devastation felt by his loss will never subside, his loved ones are comforted by his life-saving decision and know that the love Eli was surrounded with during his time on earth is now felt by the recipients of his gifts.
West Virginia One of First States to Introduce Historic Organ Donation Legislation

On Dec. 11, 2019, West Virginia became one of the first states in the nation to provide an organ donation registration option in the hunting and fishing licensing process, driving a significant increase in registrations. More than 1,000 people registered as organ donors while buying their hunting and fishing license in December alone. This historic legislation is the result of a combined effort by CORE, Donate Life West Virginia, the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources and the Office of Governor Jim Justice. Hunters and fishers in West Virginia are able to apply for their licenses online and at all in-person locations. The option to sign up as an organ donor is also included on the newly established lifetime license application. If more states choose to follow West Virginia’s lead, even more people will have the potential to receive the gift of life.

Pennsylvanians Continue to Make A Pledge for Life at DMV

Dec. 1, 2019, marked the 25th anniversary of the passage of PA Act 102. This monumental legislation was the first of its kind in the nation and opened the option to register as an organ donor at all Pennsylvania DMV locations, bringing new hope for those waiting for a life-saving gift. The passage of PA Act 102 set the stage for similar legislation at the federal level and positioned Pennsylvania as a leading advocate for organ donation. Today, more than 98% of Pennsylvania residents make the decision to register as an organ donor at the DMV, making it the leading location where Pennsylvanians make the choice to give the gift of life. This legislation has benefitted thousands of Pennsylvania residents over the past 25 years, driving an increase in the number of registered organ donors in the state.

More than 48% of current driver’s license and ID card holders — an estimated 4.93 million Pennsylvanians — are now registered organ donors.

PA Act 102 also established the Governor Robert P. Casey Memorial Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Trust Fund, inspired by Governor Casey’s heart and lung transplant in 1993. The legislation also founded the Organ Donation Advisory Committee (ODAC), an organization that recommends legislation and priorities for expenditure of the Trust Fund, while educating and generating awareness about the importance of organ donation through a variety of programs in Pennsylvania.
Beth was one of 10,000 people born with a rare heart condition called situs inversus; a condition that brought on several debilitating health complications, most notably, Kartegener’s syndrome. Due to this, Beth’s body was highly susceptible to colds, respiratory infections and pneumonia, which made her early years a constant battle and ultimately changed the course of her adult life. In September 2018, Beth was added to the national transplant waiting list for a double lung transplant. Today, as she awaits her turn at a second chance at life, Beth and her family dedicate their time to raising awareness of organ donation and remain positive about the tough road ahead. Beth holds out hope of being able to keep up with her 4-year-old twins and that one day, she will be able to return to work, get back to running and share her story of survival for those waiting for a life-saving gift.
CORE Honors Gift of Life Through Moments of Tribute

Life-saving and healing transplants are made possible by selfless heroes and families who say “yes” to donation and make A Pledge for Life. To honor, celebrate and remember these donors and the gifts they have given, CORE supports donor families by helping pay tribute to their loved ones.

A Special Place Annual Gathering

Each year, CORE holds A Special Place ceremonies in Pennsylvania and West Virginia for the families of CORE’s donors from the previous year to reflect on the lives their loved one’s lived, as well as the lives these donors saved and healed. At the event, CORE invites a recipient, a waiting list candidate and a donor family to share their stories. To conclude the ceremony, CORE invites the families in attendance to release a balloon or a butterfly in memory of their loved one.

Collectively, at the 2019 A Special Place Pennsylvania and West Virginia ceremonies, CORE paid tribute to the 214 organ donors who chose to give the gift of life in 2018. More than 1,085 tissue donors and cornea donors were also honored for healing lives through donation. These ceremonies are part of CORE’s promise to the families of our donors that their loved ones will never be forgotten — that they live on and are celebrated.

Donor Lanterns Symbolize Gratitude From CORE and Love of a Donor Family

Donor families often come to CORE to say goodbye to their loved one. In 2019, CORE began lighting Donate Life lanterns at the front desk and in the lower level of our facility to signify to team members that a donor family is visiting CORE to be with their loved one during these important final moments. The lanterns also symbolize CORE’s respect to the donor and their families, the profound emotion of a last goodbye, and the eternal love of a donor family.
Moments of Acknowledgement

CORE invites donor families to write a short, personalized tribute to their loved one at the time of donation. This Moment of Acknowledgement is then read out loud before organ recovery by a CORE team member at the donor’s bedside, while the donor’s family and the clinical team from the hospital listen and pay their respects.

This special moment in time serves as an opportunity for CORE and the entire clinical transplant community to show their appreciation and respect to the donor, their family and their gift.

CORE organ donor families and pediatric tissue donor families are offered printed and personalized memorial cards as a meaningful keepsake to honor their loved one and their life-saving gifts. These cards are often set out at funerals, sent in thank-you cards by the family after the memorial service, or kept as a symbol of remembrance for the donor families to treasure.

As another symbol of acknowledgement for the selfless donors, CORE initiated a Remembrance Quilt program in 2006, and, in 2019, continued to provide families of donors the opportunity to memorialize their loved ones. Over the years, more than 45 quilts have been stitched, featuring squares created by the loved ones of those who passed and gave the gift of life. The quilts are available for display at community events, schools, houses of worship or hospitals throughout the region to promote organ, tissue and cornea donation awareness. When not traveling to different events, the quilts are displayed prominently in CORE’s offices.
William “Chip” Crawford’s two daughters, Bryce and Shannon, surprised him with a 70th birthday adventure to Iceland in October 2016. Chip’s wife, Michel, remained home with grandchildren and in-laws. The second day turned out to be much more than the anticipated adventure when Chip lost his balance and fell into a geothermal hot spring, suffering severe burns over the majority of his body. After a helicopter rescue, Chip received trauma care in Iceland followed by a life flight to a Pittsburgh burn recovery center where he underwent 13 skin graft surgeries throughout his six-week stay — three of which were spent in a medically induced coma. Now, Chip shares his story to raise awareness of the importance of tissue donation. He recently received SOAR (Survivors Offering Assistance in Recovery) certification from the Phoenix Society, the world’s largest volunteer support organization connecting burn survivors and loved ones with others who experience similar trauma. The tissue donation was a major component of critical care, initially saving his life and, ultimately, enabling a return to an active lifestyle. He travels, has fun with multiple projects and works out daily. In April 2019, Chip and his family returned to Iceland to complete the vacation he and his daughters imagined.

“excellence
is having the resilience
to never give up on life’s greatest adventures.

william ‘chip’ crawford, jr.
tissue recipient

“to raise awareness of the importance of tissue donation.”
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Malcolm Baldrige
National Quality Award
2019 Award Recipient