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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**U.S. reaches historic achievement of 1 million organ transplants**

*CORE is proud* *to be part of organ donation and transplant system that made it possible; Pittsburgh man, the first-ever local transplant recipient, celebrates milestone more than 40 years after his groundbreaking surgery.*

***Pittsburgh, PA* –** The U.S. organ donation system has surpassed 1 million organ transplants, the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) has announced. The Center for Organ Recovery & Education (CORE), the organ procurement organization serving western Pennsylvania and West Virginia since 1977, was one of the first organizations of its kind, and as a transplant pioneer remains a leader in our country’s organ donation and transplant system.

Since 1988, when local data began to be tracked, 63,350 Pennsylvanians have received a life-saving organ transplant; 85% of those transplants were made possible because of the generosity of a donor who passed away and donated their organs as a final act of love and generosity. In that same time, 22,761 Pennsylvanians have donated an organ to someone in need – 65% as donors after their deaths and 35% as living kidney or liver donors. (Source: OPTN)

“This achievement is the result of the combined efforts of hospital partners and OPO teams, along with the generosity of donors and their families who said yes to organ donation,” said Susan Stuart, president and CEO of CORE, who, this year is celebrating her 35th year at the organization. “Today’s milestone is also a celebration of CORE’s mission to ***Save*** and ***Heal*** more lives through donation. But we can’t stop here. More than 100,000 people on the waiting list are depending on us.”

Pittsburgh resident Thomas Burke will surely be among the most affected by this news. On July 12, 1981, Burke was the first person to undergo a successful liver transplant in Pittsburgh. His surgery was performed by Thomas E. Starzl, MD, PhD, who is known to most as the “father of modern transplantation”. Burke was 26 years old at the time. And in the more than 40 years since his groundbreaking surgery, Burke has been able to get married, have two children, enjoy a successful career, and, of course, become an advocate for organ donation.

**\*\*\*Interview Available. Press Kit /Photos/B-Roll for download at https://bit.ly/1MillionTransplants\*\*\***

“The organ donation and transplant community has made lifesaving history together,” said Jerry McCauley, M.D., M.P.H., president of the UNOS Board of Directors. "Now, we invite donor families, organ transplant candidates and recipients, living organ donors and others touched by transplant to honor and celebrate the gifts that made this important milestone possible.”

A record-breaking 41,000+ transplants were performed nationwide in 2021, more than double the rate from 25 years ago. 2021 was also the 11th consecutive record-setting year for organ donation from deceased donors. Liver and heart transplants continue to set annual all-time volume records – for the past 9 and 10 years, respectively.

Locally, 2021 was the third consecutive record-breaking year organ, tissue and cornea donation across western Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. CORE, empowered by generous donors and hospital partners, Saved and Healed more than 100,000 lives in 2021, a more than 10% increase over 2020. The organization made possible nearly 700 life-saving organ transplants, all thanks to a record-breaking 325 organ donors. Of those donors, 10 were over the age of 75, a group that is often overlooked for donation due to being excluded from standard evaluation criteria for donor candidates. This number is the highest the region has ever seen, marking a 67% increase over 2020. The most notable of these donors was Cecil F. Lockhart of Welch, West Virginia, who in May 2021 became the oldest organ donor in U.S. history at 95. The recipient of his liver, a woman in her 60s, continues to do well.

Of the million U.S. transplants performed, more than half have occurred since 2007. This demonstrates a sustained trend of system-wide increases made possible by collaborative efforts to increase donation, the continuous evolution of organ preservation techniques and other scientific breakthroughs.

CORE encourages everyone to become part of our community by registering to be an organ donor – 1 person can save up to 8 lives through organ donation and change the lives of as many as 75 through tissue donation, which is crucial since only 2 percent of deaths meet the criteria for someone to become a donor. The need is great; more than 100,000 people are on the transplant waitlist.

Please register today at *RegisterMe.org/CORE.*

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**About CORE**

The Center for Organ Recovery & Education (CORE) is one of 57 federally designated not-for-profit organ procurement organizations (OPOs) in the United States, serving more than five million people in western Pennsylvania and West Virginia. CORE coordinates the recovery and matching of organs, tissues and corneas for transplant within our service region, and works tirelessly to create a culture of donation within the hospitals and communities we serve. CORE’s mission is to Save and Heal lives through donation, ultimately ending the deaths of those on the transplant waiting list, while maintaining integrity for the donation process, dignity for the donors, and compassion for their families. CORE is a winner of the 2019 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, a presidential award that recognizes nonprofits for their innovation and excellence. For more information, visit [www.core.org](http://www.core.org) or call 1-800-DONORS-7.

**About the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS)**   
United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) is the mission-driven non-profit serving as the nation’s transplant system under contract with the federal government. We lead the network of transplant hospitals, organ procurement organizations, and thousands of volunteers who are dedicated to honoring the gifts of life entrusted to us and to making lifesaving transplants possible for patients in need. Working together, we leverage data and advances in science and technology to continuously strengthen the system, increase the number of organs recovered and the number of transplants performed, and ensure patients across the nation have equitable access to transplant.