We all have a hero inside us.
My term as Chair of the Board of Directors of the Center for Organ Recovery & Education came to an end on Dec. 31, 2018. In all of my years in business and as a member of many community organizations, it is easy for me to say that I have received no greater sense of community or greater sense of purpose than what I have experienced during my term as Chair. The mission of CORE and the number of lives that CORE touches on a daily basis is remarkable. I am both honored and humbled to have been given the opportunity to be the Chair of the Board of Directors of this incredible organization.

It is not easy to identify the highlights during my term, as I can easily say that the entire two years were a highlight. If I had to pick one moment that helped to solidify my commitment to the mission of CORE, it would be the time that CORE’s CEO, Susan Stuart, asked me to visit a donor family to provide them with memorial items for their son who had died suddenly and was an organ donor. I must admit that standing outside the house of this family may have been the most nervous I have ever been in my professional life. What would I say, what would they say, how emotional would they be, how emotional would I be, what was the right thing to say, what shouldn’t I say, how long should I stay and why did I agree to do this in the first place?

Then, the most amazing thing happened when I met the parents of the young man who had died. When I introduced myself to the mother and father, they thanked me for coming and immediately asked me how all the donor recipients were doing. I could hardly respond, as my emotions were immediately at tilt level and the tears were caught in my throat. How could this family that just experienced an unbelievable tragedy be more concerned with the lives of those who had received the donation of organs from their son? I am not sure that I ever really truly understood the mission of CORE or the impact that CORE’s services had on the community that we serve until that moment.

I am proud of the commitment of our Board and Committee members. I am proud of the work performed by the employees of CORE every day. I am excited to continue as a member of the CORE Board of Directors while I turn over the role of Chair to Janet James, who is the first ever Chair from West Virginia. I am confident that Janet will be a wonderful Chair for CORE and will maintain the strong traditions of CORE.

Thank you,

JAMES P. KELLY
Past Chair

A lifetime of memories in just two years.
Statistics

214 ORGAN DONORS
604 ORGANS TRANSPLANTED
1,085 TISSUE DONORS

86.2% Corneas Transplanted (Up Over 9% From 2017)
+9.5% Increase In Hearts Transplanted (69 In 2018)
+60% Increase In Lungs Transplanted (56 In 2018)

2018 FINANCIAL DATA

- 2% Legal, Professional & Insurance Expenses
- 2% Staff Expenses
- 3% Education
- 3% Office Expenses & Equipment
- 4% Medical Supplies
- 8% Occupancy Expenses
- 8% Employee Benefits
- 23% Pass Through Charter Service Expenses
- 44% Organ Acquisition Fees
- 23% Salaries & Contracted Services

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ABOVE: Our #Humanside campaign put a face to organ donation by sharing real stories on YouTube.

ABOVE: Train wraps, billboards and more tapped into the rivalry between Pittsburghers and Philadelphians.

198,163 REGISTRATIONS

8,000

Pennsylvanians may receive a second chance at life.
CORE, Donate Life PA hit a registration milestone with a little healthy competition.

180,000 new registered organ and tissue donors from 2015 to 2018:

That was the ambitious goal set by Donate Life Pennsylvania, an organization comprising CORE, Gift of Life Donor Program, and the Pennsylvania Departments of Health and Transportation.

Working with Harrisburg marketing agency Pavone, Donate Life PA surpassed the milestone, logging 198,163 registrations. To get there, they embarked on the organization’s most thought-provoking marketing campaign to date, leaving no stone unturned and targeting would-be donors with outdoor, print and social media ads, and digital video. Reaching this goal increases the chances that the more than 8,000 Pennsylvanians waiting for a life-saving transplant may receive a second chance at life.

“WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?”

Efforts over the past three years included Pavone’s “Which Side Are You On?” campaign, which highlighted the perceived differences between organ donor registrants and those who aren’t registered. The campaign pulled no punches, delivering a compelling call-to-action to not sit on the fence any longer, but make the life-saving decision to register as a donor.

We picked our battles in eastern and western PA. Campaigns included a statewide media buy, with targeted billboards that pitted Pittsburgh and Philadelphia residents against each other in an organ donor registration battle that tapped into cross-state rivalries. The Philadelphia billboard — in black and gold and signed “Pittsburgh” — taunted Eagles fans with the claim that “Yinz got no heart, Philly” and challenged proud residents to “prove us wrong” by signing up to be an organ donor. The Pittsburgh billboard, in green and white, delivered a similar jab.

“HUMAN SIDE OF DONATION”

To provide a balance between the emotional and rational messaging of the “Which Side Are You On?” campaign, Pavone developed a series of vignettes that showcased the “Human Side of Donation.” These videos — posted on Facebook and as YouTube pre-roll ads — featured people at all stages of the donation process, including families of donors, organ recipients and those on the waiting list.

Donate Life PA is funded by Pennsylvania residents through voluntary contributions to the Governor Robert P. Casey Memorial Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Trust Fund, including driver’s license renewals, vehicle registrations and state income tax filings.
Like all heroes, we aren't in it for the credit.

But we were excited to earn our reaccreditation from the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations (AOPO).

In March, CORE obtained Association of Organ Procurement Organization (AOPO) reaccreditation following a two-day review by organ procurement organization (OPO) peers, who evaluated CORE’s compliance with the AOPO standards and federal regulations.

AOPO's voluntary accreditation program ensures that organ procurement organizations are not only following federally mandated guidelines and procedures but are also operating in a way that reinforces public trust in donation and honors every gift of life and every donor to the fullest.

The reaccreditation process is meant to foster an environment of continuous improvement within OPOs. The hope is that as OPOs, like CORE, continuously improve their own performances, improvements in organ, tissue and cornea quality and transplant outcomes will also occur.

During the review in January, a team of OPO staff who serve on the AOPO Standards and Accreditation Committee conducted an on-site survey and desk audits. CORE welcomed the opportunity to offer the examiners an inside look at the processes CORE uses to gauge employee compliance and performance. Specifically, CORE was recognized for the organization’s business continuity plan, the IT department’s staff education on external threats, and the formal market analysis done by the Community Outreach department.
CORE, LifeNet Health hold Tissue Symposium.

In September, at CORE’s Pittsburgh headquarters, CORE hosted a Healthcare Professionals Symposium for transplant coordinators, administrators and nurses. The symposium was held in collaboration with LifeNet Health, a partner tissue bank.

A major focus of the symposium was how CORE and hospital transplant staff can work together to foster an environment that inspires more donor families and recipients to communicate with one another. CORE specifically highlighted our Thanks2You program, which encourages tissue recipients to thank their donor families through letters and cards, and which facilitated 626 letters exchanged between when it started in 2015 and the end of 2018.

The day-long Symposium also offered attendees the opportunity to learn about the tissue recovery and transplantation process, to understand how donated tissue is healing patients in new and innovative ways, to better grasp the referral and authorization process and tissue donor eligibility, and to hear the personal stories of fellow donation heroes, including Lisa Owens, who received a life-saving tissue transplant in 2014.

Key transplant staff from transplant centers in CORE’s western Pennsylvania and West Virginia service region as well as representatives from several of CORE’s 150 donor hospitals attended the summit.
A dad; a coach; a transplant recipient. After experiencing kidney failure, a transplant was Ron’s best option for getting back on the field.

Today, he’s back to coaching and volunteering, and he credits his young donor for giving him more time to spend with his family and community.
Jason Fetter was only 7 years old when he died in a tragic drowning accident. His mother, Anna, chose to donate his organs so that he could give life to others.

Now, three people are alive and well because of the generous spirit of a little boy and his mom.
Ask Bud if he believes in angels and he’ll likely introduce you to one. Her name is Rachelle. She goes to his church and gave him half her liver.

Now, he’s back to enjoying his life – one great-grandchild at a time.
Four-year-old Rosie Vargas was born with a rare metabolic disorder. A liver transplant helped her to regain her health and avoid the constant risk of brain damage that can result from her condition.

Registered organ donors give kids like Rosie and their families hope.
Honoring the heroes who gave the gift of life.

In 2018, CORE was honored to hold its 25th annual A Special Place ceremony in Pittsburgh. This was the seventh year that CORE also held A Special Place ceremony for West Virginia donor families in Charleston, WV.

At CORE’s headquarters in Pittsburgh on June 10, more than 125 donor families, CORE staff and board members, as well as the extended transplant community, came together to celebrate and remember the 633 organ and 1,150 tissue and cornea donors who gave the gift of life in 2017, and also give hope to those still waiting for a life-saving gift.

Megan Kelly, a donor wife from Kittanning, PA, shared her personal story of tragedy and hope. After her husband died unexpectedly at the young age of 38, he became an organ donor. “We were able to donate almost everything except his lungs,” Megan told the crowd. “I received a letter from the woman who received his corneas. That was a beautiful day. I will be writing letters to his other recipients soon. I want them to know how blessed we all feel that Brandon was able to give this gift — the gift of life and hope. Donating his organs is not just a blessing for the recipients and their families, it is a blessing to all those who loved him.”

At the time, Tarra Felsing of Slippery Rock, PA, was one of the 2,500 people waiting for a life-saving transplant in CORE’s service region of western Pennsylvania and West Virginia. She provided her perspective as she waited for not only lungs but also her personal hero. She was transplanted only a few months after A Special Place.

Michele and Anthony Donatelli of New Kensington, PA — donor parents whose decision to allow the donation of their son’s organs saved the lives of several recipients — also spoke. They shared remembrances of their son Patrick McKallip, who passed when he was just 26 years old.

Pediatric heart recipient Zoha Adeel and her mother also conveyed their profound thanks to the donor families in attendance. Following the ceremony, donor families were given the opportunity to enjoy lunch together while watching a beautiful tribute video that included their personalized remembrances of each of their loved ones.

At the Clay Center in Charleston, WV, on September 23, more than 30 families came together for the special event. Guest speakers in West Virginia included donor mom Hilda Halstead of Charleston, whose daughter, Nadya, struggled with everyday
life and became addicted to drugs. When Nadya died of an overdose, Hilda made the decision to turn the tragedy into a time of hope for those waiting for a life-saving transplant. Nadya saved five individuals by donating her heart, lungs, liver and both kidneys.

CORE Advocate and kidney recipient Calvin Woods of Dunbar, WV, also shared his moving story of kidney disease and transplant. Finally, Debbie Donnellan, who’s waiting for a kidney transplant, along with her service dog, Tulgey, thanked the donor families for giving her hope during her uncertain wait.

Prior to each ceremony, donor family members pinned quilt squares in remembrance of their loved ones, and each A Special Place was capped off with a moment for loved ones to send their adoration to their departed loved one above — in Pittsburgh, it was through a balloon release; in Charleston, donor families released butterflies.
2018 saw many successes. Among the most significant was the passage of The Donate Life PA Act by the Pennsylvania Legislature.

This legislation was first introduced in 2010, and through years of hard work, compromise and collaboration — as well as the support of the House and Senate leadership, and the long-standing advocacy of Senator Greenleaf and Representative Petrarca — Pennsylvania can continue to be a leader in the field of donation and transplantation in 2019 and beyond.

This was, no doubt, a victory for CORE — but more so for the more than 7,000 Pennsylvanians on the national transplant waiting list who now have renewed hope of a second chance at life, and for so many grieving donor families who will now be safeguarded the opportunity of donation.

Specifically, this much-needed update to the state’s 1994 organ donation law requires a coroner to issue a written statement providing the reason why he or she intends to deny recovery of all eligible organs when a death is under investigation. This update respects the authority of state coroners and protects criminal investigations while also safeguarding the wishes of each donor or their family. CORE believes that the more rigorous documentation and discussion required for a denial, which this law outlines, will translate into more organs available for transplant. The legislation also updated living will and healthcare power-of-attorney documents to authorize limited use of artificial support to preserve the opportunity for donation.

The Donate Life PA Act also increased the voluntary contribution from $1 to $3, which motorists can make to The Governor Robert P. Casey Memorial Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Trust Fund. This trust fund is the primary funding source for statewide education campaigns about organ, tissue and cornea donation as well as support services for Pennsylvania donor families. In recent years, the fund has been facing insolvency due to a decline in contributions and it is CORE’s hope that the $2 increase can make up for this gap.

Finally, while the Organ & Tissue Donation Awareness (OTDA) Project — which gives grants to secondary schools throughout the Commonwealth who incorporate donation into their curriculums — had been in place for more than two decades, the passage of this legislation will likely bolster the project’s scope and effectiveness, because the law now requires the PA Department of Education to provide a model curriculum about organ donation for use in grades 9 through 12.
The Donate Life PA Act was presented and ceremonially signed by Pennsylvania Governor Wolf on Nov. 13 at a signing in Harrisburg with CORE and OPO colleagues from Gift of Life Donor Program (GOL). CORE, GOL, fellow members of the Governor’s Organ Donation Advisory Committee, and partners at Donate Life PA are now working on implementing the changes that the new law mandates.

“CORE believes that the more rigorous documentation and discussion required for a denial will translate into more organs available for transplant.”

300% INCREASE

In the new voluntary contribution rate under the The Donate Life PA Act