SUCCESS THROUGH RESILIENCE: LEARNING FROM EXCELLENCE

More than 90,000 Lives Saved and Healed
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CORE 2020 ANNUAL REPORT
OPENING LETTER

When we wrote this same letter this time last year, our world was just beginning to understand the gravity of the global pandemic that was on our doorstep. Since then, we’ve lived through a year unlike any other in our lifetimes — a year which required outstanding strength and agility. It was a year during which many of us experienced for ourselves the true fragility of our own health, a reality that so many of our waiting list candidates and transplant recipients know all too well. The pandemic brought uncertainty, but we persevered.

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with an overwhelming sense of pride for the resiliency and continued excellence shown by our staff and volunteers, in large part thanks to the support of our tremendous hospital partners. Few periods in CORE’s more than 40-year history have been more challenging or difficult than 2020. And yet, we rose above, achieving a second consecutive record-breaking year for organ donation in our region. Together, we saved nearly 800 lives and healed 90,000 more through tissue and cornea donation. We accomplished a great deal, and we recognize that getting here wasn’t easy.

Our strong, longstanding relationships with our hospital partners, local lawmakers and community leaders made navigating these uncharted waters possible, as did our own standards of excellence. We entered the year as a newly named Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award winner, and the key processes identified in our journey to receive the prestigious Presidential-level honor were quickly put to the test. Those processes allowed for adaptability amid disruption, empowering us to find new ways to connect with our communities, to spread awareness and to facilitate the life-saving gifts that are so desperately needed.

We met with donor families in parking lots, hosted virtual events, quickly implemented donor COVID-19 testing, and found ways to Save and Heal lives while some teams adjusted to working remotely for the first time in our organization’s history. We celebrated new milestones, including the one-year anniversary of historic legislation in West Virginia that has, to date, allowed 25,000 people to register as an organ donor when purchasing their hunting and fishing license. Most importantly, we all banded together to bring light to a very dark time.

Still, our work is not finished. We embark on the year ahead filled with hope and driven by a goal of Saving and Healing even more lives in 2021. But we can’t do it alone. Accomplishing our goals depends not just on some of us, but on all of us.

On our selfless donors and their families who say “yes” to organ donation. On our staff who continue to find creative ways to engage with those families. On our partners who share in our saving mission. It takes a community, and luckily, we have one.

There are nearly 110,000 waiting list candidates counting on us for their second chance at life. With continued dedication and determination, and all of you, we know we can bring them renewed hope through heroic donors who make that second chance possible.

Thank you,

Susan A. Stuart
President and CEO

Janet James
Past-Chair, Board of Directors
2020 STATISTICS:

- **324 ORGAN DONORS** | +28% INCREASE OVER 2019
- **1,224 TISSUE DONORS** | +9% INCREASE OVER 2019
- **792 LIVES SAVED** | +20% INCREASE OVER 2019
- **90K LIVES HEALED**
- **864 DONATED HEARTS** | +43% INCREASE
- **442 DONATED KIDNEYS** | +15% INCREASE
- **206 DONATED LIVERS** | +39% INCREASE
- **2 DONATED INTESTINES** | +100% INCREASE
- **324 ORGAN DONORS**
- **1,224 TISSUE DONORS**
- **792 LIVES SAVED**
- **90K LIVES HEALED**
- **864 DONATED HEARTS**
- **442 DONATED KIDNEYS**
- **206 DONATED LIVERS**
- **2 DONATED INTESTINES**

2020 FINANCIALS:

- Salaries & Contracted Services: 23%
- Organ Acquisition Fees: 44%
- Other: 100%

- 10% Pass Through Charter Services
- 7% Employee Benefits
- 5% Medical Supplies
- 4% Occupancy
- 2% Office Supplies & Equipment
- 2% Staff Expenses
- 1% Legal, Professional & Insurance Expenses

**MISSION VISION VALUES**

To Save and Heal lives through donation.

Every potential donor will make A Pledge for Life.

Compassion • Education • Innovation • Integrity • Life • Quality • Respect • Responsiveness

**2019 MALCOLM BALDRIGE NATIONAL QUALITY AWARD WINNER**

**+25,000 WEST VIRGINIANS** registered as organ donors when they purchased their WV hunting and fishing license thanks to historic legislation passed in 2019.
Teams Pivot to Serve Communities Amid COVID-19

CORE’s pursuit of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award proved to be an invaluable foundation for navigating a pandemic year. Specifically, the Baldrige framework and emergency preparedness plans established during the nearly decade-long performance excellence journey ensured the continuity of the organization’s operations — by moving forward the critical processes that are essential for fulfilling CORE’s mission. And by allowing its leadership team and workforce to remain safe, CORE was resilient, agile and motivated throughout the constantly evolving health crisis. Setting a regional record for organ donation in the middle of a global pandemic was a product of many departments working together to overcome countless challenges and ensure CORE’s key processes could continue safely.
The emergency plans CORE established during our decade-long Baldrige performance excellence journey prepared us for a time of crisis and allowed our team to remain safe and mission-focused as well as ensured the continuity of the organization’s operations amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though three of our nine key work processes had been significantly affected by the pandemic, CORE made donation and transplantation happen – all while facing issues with space, supplies, testing and logistics. The result: another record-breaking year.

- Human Resources/Legal retained a safe and engaged workforce throughout the global pandemic – maintaining 85% of the workforce while simultaneously expanding the total number of employees. The department also worked with our hospital partners to secure vaccinations for clinical staff in December 2020, and for non-clinical staff in January 2021.
- Finance, usually a highly-paper driven department, adjusted staff roles and office logistics to maintain accuracy and timeliness – this was especially remarkable given that the record-breaking clinical volume in 2020 came with a record number of invoices and billings to process.
- Even though the COVID-19 pandemic created never before seen supply chain challenges not only for medical supplies, but also equipment, the Materials Management Department secured PPE, ORs, and cleaning and sanitation supplies so that the organization could continue key work processes without disruption. Remarkably, the department also oversaw the completion of a third in-house operating room suites.

ICU, and instrument sterilization area, which provides the opportunity to move additional organ donors in house.

- In 2020, the Quality team deployed an entirely new Electronic Donor Record module, successfully kept chart review cycle times brief and recorded exemplary customer survey results.
- The Hospital Development team leveraged relationships with hospital leadership to ensure organ donation education would not fall by the wayside. Coupled with embracing digital platforms to quickly deploy materials, this strategy helped sustain hospital referrals and decrease process breakdowns within hospitals across CORE’s DSA from 7.65% in 2019 to 4.73% in 2020.
- CORE’s Procurement team navigated changes to clinical processes and new safety requirements while keeping up with incoming referrals, which didn’t slow down due to COVID-19.
- Recovery staff kept up with numerous criteria changes deployed by the CDC and medical directors as the pandemic unfolded, relying on virtual trainings to ensure the safety of recovered tissue.
- The Eye Bank responded to interruptions in scheduled surgeries by temporarily stepping up to assist in other areas of the organization, while simultaneously developing testing protocols to ensure a swift return to cornea transplants.
- IT teams rapidly deployed technology to support a partially remote workforce, ensuring no disruption to teams as they navigated their busiest year ever. Their guidance was critical for allowing the organization to quickly adapt new ways of working and maintain essential operations.
- The Lab met urgent demands for COVID-19 testing, working closely with hospital partners to facilitate rapid tests and establishing internal safety protocols to allow day-to-day lab operations to continue.
- CORE’s Donor Referral team carefully reviewed referral data to make process enhancements and made efforts to improve already strong referral response rates, all while maneuvering through new pandemic precautions.
- The Community Outreach team made the decision to pause paid media campaigns given the sensitivity surrounding COVID-19, instead spreading awareness about the critical need for organ donors through virtual volunteer meetings and learning opportunities.
- Donor Family Services turned to Zoom and developed closed Facebook Groups to support families throughout the grieving process in situations where on-site meetings weren’t possible.

“

We’re incredibly inspired by the tenacity our staff exhibited during the pandemic’s early days and continue to show today.

Michael Gerusky
Director of Innovation and Process Improvement
CORE Leverages Virtual Venue for National Donor Sabbath Celebration

Despite uncertainty caused during the COVID-19 pandemic, local faith leaders, donor families and transplant recipients joined together virtually to celebrate National Donor Sabbath on Nov. 13, 2020. Hosted by CORE, the first-ever virtual event came at a critical time during the height of the pandemic to reinforce hope for those waiting for a life-saving gift while also raising awareness about the importance of donation. Themed “Be a Symbol of Hope for Those Who Are Waiting,” the event honored donors and their families, while fostering understanding of donation and transplantation within the context of religious beliefs.

Even in a virtual setting, the beauty of the National Donor Sabbath observance shined bright through the delivery of heartfelt readings, prayers and messages of hope, as well as a candlelight vigil. Above all, the event reinforced that most major religions believe that donation is one of the greatest acts of love and generosity.

“It’s so very wonderful and beautiful to be able to know that somebody has given up their life for you,” said liver recipient and church deacon Don Pepe, who spoke during the event. Other speakers included in the event were Minister Vicky Keene of Restoration Praise Temple in Dunbar, W.Va. who received a double lung transplant in July 2020, and Dr. Herman Jones, associate professor at Slippery Rock University (retired), who is currently awaiting a kidney transplant. Faith leaders from across the region also spoke during the event, sharing their personal connections to organ donation and leading attendees in prayer.

“National Donor Sabbath is an opportunity to dispel myths and encourage individuals to make the spiritual decision to help save lives,” said Susan Stuart. “We are proud to have joined our community of donation together during the National Donor Sabbath observance and hope we can be back in person in 2021.”
Saving More Lives: Expanding Organ Acceptance Criteria

Despite 2020 being a record year for organ donation in western PA, WV, and nationally, 20 people continue to die every day waiting for a life-saving organ transplant because too few organs are available. Today, OPOs are working with transplant surgeons to bridge the gap between organs needed for transplant and organs available for transplant by utilizing organs that only a few years ago would have been considered unsuitable for transplantation.

Joseph Africa, MD, Medical Director at Charleston Area Medical Center and member of the CORE Advisory Board, is among a group of surgeons nationwide who routinely looks beyond the standard evaluation criteria for organ donors. When OPOs, like CORE, recover organs, there are standards that have traditionally guided transplant surgeons on whether or not to accept an organ for transplant. Historically, that criteria has often excluded organs from donors of a certain age, or from donors who have comorbidities including obesity and hypertension. But, according to Dr. Africa, for the right recipient, organs from these donors can still give a full, healthy life after transplant. That’s why he now accepts and transplants these organs regularly. In doing so, he has given those waiting increased hope that they may receive a second chance at life.

“We were emboldened to consider organs that fell outside of the standard criteria for some of our older patients after recognizing in clinic that they were much more fit for transplant than they might appear on paper,” Dr. Africa said. “Ultimately, expanding the criteria for organ acceptance was a better alternative to these patients remaining on dialysis. Our outcomes have shown it was the right decision.”

This shift in thinking and practice has not only benefited recipients, but also donor families who can now find healing through donation even though their loved one may not meet the standard evaluation criteria. In the long term, it reinforces CORE’s own mantra of “every donor, every time,” by opening the door for more surgeons — and in turn, more OPOs — to follow Dr. Africa’s lead and expand organ acceptance criteria, saving more transplant recipients. CORE is proud to work with esteemed physicians like Dr. Africa to broaden the possibilities surrounding organ donation and allow more individuals in the region to benefit from the gift of life.

*See page 27 for expanded criteria organ donor recipient story.
In December 2020, CORE celebrated the one-year anniversary of its partnership with the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This innovative partnership enables West Virginians to register as an organ donor when they purchase a hunting and fishing license, and, in its first year, generated more than 25,000 organ donor registrations.

“We are not just celebrating one year since West Virginians were able to register as organ donors when they purchased a hunting and fishing license,” said Colleen Sullivan, director of public affairs and donor family services, during the anniversary press conference with Governor Jim Justice on Dec. 2, 2020. “We are also celebrating the 25,000 West Virginians who have chosen to hunt, fish and donate life when buying those licenses.”

This achievement is the result of a combined effort by CORE, Donate Life West Virginia, the West Virginia DNR and the Office of Governor Jim Justice, who

Hunt. Fish. Donate Life.
Successful W.Va. Partnership Drives 25K Organ Donor Registrations
“With the focus on the pandemic, it gets us thinking that, from the medical end of what’s going on in our lives, just how important organ donation is. With that, I encourage you to sign up as an organ donor.”

Jim Justice
Governor of West Virginia

pushed forward legislation creating the option for hunters and fishers in West Virginia to sign up as organ donors while getting their license for the upcoming season. This option is also included on the newly established lifetime license application.

West Virginia is proud to be one of the first states in the nation to provide an organ donation registration option in the hunting and fishing licensing process, offering hope to the 500 West Virginians who are currently waiting for a life-saving transplant. Others, including Pennsylvania, are considering similar legislation to make it easier for every potential donor to make A Pledge for Life.
CORE Launches Gallery of Heroes to Honor Donors’ Legacies

CORE is privileged to offer donor families a new opportunity to remember their loved ones through an online memorial wall, named Gallery of Heroes. The online gallery, completed in 2020 and launched in February 2021, allows family and friends to share stories and photos to celebrate the lives of their loved ones, while recognizing their role as heroes in giving the gift of life.

“The Gallery of Heroes is another place to bring our community together to honor, celebrate and remember the lives of our heroic donors and donor families,” said Colleen Sullivan. “Even during the darkest of times, we are hopeful that the online gallery provides support and a sense of community to those coping with the loss of a loved one.”

The Gallery of Heroes is available on smartphone, tablet and desktop and was created so that donor families and friends can easily upload stories and photo tributes, keeping the legacy of their loved ones alive. Family and friends are also able to make a monetary donation in memory of a donor through their page.

Elements of the Gallery of Heroes will be prominently displayed in the lobby of CORE's headquarters, further honoring those featured and also creating a welcoming environment for visiting donor families and friends.

If you would like to add a tribute of a loved one or make a donation in memory of a donor, please visit www.coreheroes.org.

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Officer Cassie Johnson

Charleston Police Officer Cassie Johnson lived a tragically short but wonderful life. When Officer Johnson took her oath as a Charleston police officer, she made a commitment to do everything in her power to protect others. She did just that — not only when she was killed in the line of duty, but when, after her death, she offered others life as an organ donor.

True heroes live on forever, and Officer Johnson is proof of that. Thanks to Officer Johnson, a 50-year-old man now has a healthy heart and hope for the future. A person who was near death can breathe again with the help of two working lungs. A man in his 40s will survive because of her liver, and a young woman can live a full life without kidney dialysis. And though her loss is felt deeply by her loved ones, they take comfort and pride in knowing that she lives on forever through her final gift as an organ donor.

"Even in Cassie’s tragic death, others will live because of her. What a testament to an amazing woman.”

U.S. Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-WV

In life and in death, Officer Cassie Johnson has proven to be the very best among us.

Chelsie Sobecki
Donor Family Support Coordinator

Agility in Action: Spreading Hope in New Ways

Life-saving and healing transplants are made possible by health care heroes at the seven transplant centers and more than 150 hospitals and health care facilities that CORE serves. In the early days of the pandemic, these critical hospital staff members faced taxing challenges as COVID-19 cases rose across the region.

CORE staff and volunteers felt compelled to show their support. They took immediate action, drafting letters of thanks to local hospital teams. The heartfelt letters of gratitude detailed the authors’ personal connections to donation, including stories from transplant recipients from Allegheny General Hospital. The uplifting messages were delivered to the hospital’s clinical staff when they needed them most, commending their dedication during an uncertain time.

Compassionate volunteers and CORE staff also found ways to offer support to donor families, even while under stay-at-home orders. They honored the lives of organ donors by making no-sew blankets, which were then delivered to families in times of mourning. The blankets brought warmth and love to those who ultimately make CORE’s life-saving mission possible by saying “yes” to donation and making A Pledge for Life.

"As the recipient of a donor heart, it means so much to me to volunteer alongside my children to brighten the spirits of donor families whose loved ones made second chances like mine possible.

Brandy Sweeney
Heart Recipient
Bobbie and Brian Pino were married 15 beautiful years before Brian, age 51, suddenly died in May 2020. She recalls growing closer than ever in the months before his death, working from home due to COVID-19 and spending countless hours together. Now, she remembers Brian for his infectious laugh, forgiving nature and their shared love of the Grateful Dead’s music. Most importantly, she finds comfort in his legacy of donation. Brian designated himself as an organ donor before his untimely passing. That decision allowed him to change the lives of three people through donation of his organs. His kidneys gave hope to a man in his 50s and a woman in her 60s. And his liver saved the life of a 68-year-old father of nine who is now able to spend more days with his spouse of 48 years and watch his 22 grandchildren grow. Brian’s spirit lives on in Bobbie’s heartfelt memories and through those whose lives he touched through donation.

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When Sandra Simon was placed on the national transplant waiting list for a life-saving kidney in June 2020, she expected to spend years on dialysis waiting for a match. The average wait time for a kidney is five years, yet Sandra received the call far sooner. That’s because Dr. Africa identified Sandra as a good candidate for a transplant using a kidney that falls outside of traditional evaluation standards, allowing Sandra to be matched earlier than she ever thought possible. On New Year’s Eve 2020, she received her transplant and, notably, became CAMC’s 100th transplant recipient of the year. Now, Sandra is able to live a life full of promise and free from dialysis — all because one donor decided to give the gift of life, and Dr. Africa chose to accept that gift. Her future is brighter for it.
“I not only look forward to helping more people receive the gift of sight, but also hope to give more donor families the peace and comfort that donation offers, and which I’ve witnessed first-hand.”

Anita Gordon, CTBS, Director of Eye Bank Operations

CORE is one of only four complete OPOs in the country, meaning its structure features an onsite Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA)-accredited eye bank that includes surgical suites and a lab. This allows the cornea transplantation process to run more efficiently, and ultimately, more successfully. Specifically, the CORE Eye Bank is responsible for recovering ocular tissue from donors; tissue evaluation to determine suitability for surgical use; donor eligibility determination to establish acceptability of tissue for transplant; processing the corneas for the specific needs of each corneal surgeon and their patients; and final distribution of the corneal tissue to the location where the transplant will take place. This enables CORE to manage the full donor cycle, ensuring optimal recovery conditions.

The CORE Eye Bank experienced a robust year of advancement and transition in 2020, adapting to pandemic challenges and, notably, entering a new phase of leadership. At the close of 2020, Eye Bank Poised for Expanded Technological Offerings Under Leadership of New Director

Anita Gordon, CTBS, was appointed as director of Eye Bank operations. Anita previously served as tissue recovery manager at CORE, where she oversaw day-to-day tissue recovery operations. She brings 20 years of clinical experience to her new role, in which she will lead Eye Bank operations at CORE’s Pittsburgh headquarters, furthering its meaningful purpose of restoring sight by providing donor eye tissue for vision-saving cornea transplants, medical education and research.

Gordon’s focus for the Eye Bank is on continued innovation, with a goal of expanding technological offerings for both transplant surgeons and cornea transplant patients. These expanded offerings serve to enhance the already strong relationships CORE holds with transplant surgeons in the region, who have an expectation of high-quality corneas for transplant that CORE exceeds year after year, with the highest performance standards for cornea recovery, processing and availability. Her leadership gives CORE the foundation for continued success in this area in 2021 and beyond.

Since its founding in 1997, CORE’s Eye Bank has restored sight to nearly 20,000 men, women and children through cornea transplants. Though cornea transplant surgeries were briefly paused in 2020 due to COVID-19, the Eye Bank team’s dedication to this important work never wavered. CORE’s Eye Bank coordinated 142 cornea transplants and maintained a 98% DSAEK success rate in 2020. This tradition of excellence will continue to be upheld under Gordon’s esteemed leadership, and bolstered through her expertise in process improvement, performance management, regulatory compliance, relationship building and customer satisfaction.

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Bridgeport, WV native Sami Wilson was a healthy 19-year-old — a volleyball state champion and student at Fairmont State University. But during a routine exam, Sami learned her kidneys were failing and that she needed a kidney transplant.

Sami was listed for transplant at UPMC Children’s Hospital, and she and her mother temporarily relocated to Pittsburgh so that she could undergo dialysis treatment three times per week.

Around the same time, CORE approached Sami and asked her to be the face of the new Donate Life West Virginia “End the Wait” campaign, which is featured in all DMV locations statewide.

Less than one year after being first listed for transplant, Sami received her gift of life in early 2021, when her aunt, Debbie Huffman, donated her kidney as a living donor. Today, Sami is looking forward to a bright and healthy future.

Sami Wilson
Kidney Recipient
Right now, nearly 4,000 people in the U.S. are at the end stages of heart failure and in dire need of a transplant. A new method of recovering donor hearts has the potential to expand the pool of donors available to fulfill this critical need. In 2020, CORE utilized the method for the first time to recover a heart from one selfless donor. Organ donation is only possible after someone has died under very specific medical conditions and with written permission from the patient through the organ donor registry or through his or her family. Those specific medical conditions include donation after brain death (DBD) and donation after circulatory death (DCD). Historically, DCD donors were not considered for heart transplantation due to the potential injury that takes place once the heart stops beating and oxygen is not circulating. Heart transplants were limited to DBD donors, and only kidneys, livers and lungs could be donated through DCD. However, a new method “reanimating” donor hearts using the TransMedics OCS™ Heart System has the potential to change this.

The novel method involves recovering the donor heart, resuscitating it to its normal beating state, and then clinically assessing it before transplantation can occur. This innovative approach is currently being tested by a handful of hospitals and organ procurement organizations (OPOs), including CORE. While 2020 marked the first time CORE utilized the technology to give one waiting list candidate a second chance at life, it will not be the last. Through this new technology, an estimated 30% more hearts could become available for transplantation. The advancement positions CORE to make life-saving gifts possible for even more individuals on the waiting list and allow thousands more donor families to find comfort in the lasting legacy of donation.

Through this new technology, an estimated 30% more hearts could become available for transplant.
Every gift makes a difference, and these hospital partners helped significantly reduce the number of individuals waiting for a life-saving organ transplant in the region by achieving record-breaking organ donor numbers in 2020.*

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<td>West Virginia University Hospitals</td>
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*A previous version of this report contained an incomplete list of record-breaking hospital numbers across organ, tissue and cornea donor categories. The report has since been updated to reflect the hospitals in CORE’s service area that achieved record-breaking years for organ donation only in 2020.