



Transplant Times

Organ Transplant Awareness Program

March 2022

Promoting Organ Donor Awareness; Supporting the Transplant Community

Support group meeting to be announced at a later date.

Hello!

I hope everyone is well. First of all, Congratulations to Marianne Eaton, a support group attendee who finally received a kidney transplant at Mayo Clinic in Phoenix on January 31st. She had been on the wait list for almost 5 years. We wish her a speedy recovery.

Unfortunately, Senate Bill 81, the Organ Donor Registry, was not put on the agenda by the Governor this year. Next year Senator Ortiz y Pino will be able to introduce the bill and we will once again ask for your support.

Margaret Lopez and the scholarship team are reviewing the scholarship essays that were submitted this year. The winner will be announced in the April newsletter.

The New Mexico Kidney Walk will take place on June 5, 2022. A committee is being formed to execute the walk. Volunteers are needed for everything from delivering flyers to obtaining refreshments. Is any one interested in representing OTAP at the meetings?

The rent for our storage unit has increased to \$50 per month. Our inventory consists of about 200 rolls of Christmas wrapping paper and some tables/chair. Someone has offered to store the tables. I will store the promotional items and miscellaneous supplies. Does anyone have any storage space available for the wrapping paper? Please let me know, 505 948 4099. - Evelyn



Transplant Recipient Anniversaries



Judith McKinney

Liver

March 18, 1993

29 years!

Meghan Lewis's Transplant Journey

Hi my name is Meghan Lewis. I am a 30 year old chef, currently living in Tijeras New Mexico. I recently came across your web page and wanted to share my story with you guys.

Since I was 15, I have been working in kitchens and trying to make a life for myself. I put work before everything, even my own health. In 2017 I was living in Keystone, Colorado working for vail resorts at one of the restaurants there. I was living a pretty normal life, other than the fact that I was working all of the time and also drinking quite heavily. A few months prior to moving to Keystone, I was living in Steamboat Springs, and ended up getting a DUI during my time there. I had to serve 6 days total in jail before December 2017. So during my off time at work, I went back to Steamboat Springs, and served my 6 days in jail. November 1st through the 6th. I remember my time there, I started to have back pain within the first few days I was there. My urine was dark and it felt as if I were having kidney stones again. The last day I was there, I was so tired, I wasn't eating, and I thought that maybe I had the flu or something. When I was released, I drove back to my apartment in Keystone. From November 6th to November 14th I was experiencing major fatigue, I could not eat, was vomiting, and my eyes and skin were turning yellow. My friend was the one who informed me about my skin and eye color. I did not realize what was happening to me. I remember being so tired, and sleeping until 6pm every day. Work started back up on November 14th, so I gathered enough strength just to make it into work. About an hour into the shift I had to let my boss know that I was feeling well and that I needed to go home. As a 27 year old, you don't think anything will happen to you, especially life threatening. So I went home, knowing I did not have insurance at the time, looked online for liver cleansing stuff. I went to sprouts and bought different kinds of supplements for the liver... thinking it would work... On November 16th, I knew something was wrong, I wasn't getting better so I decided that my life was worth more than a hospital bill. My

roommate at the time was off of work that day, and she was able to take me to the emergency room. When I got there I told them that there was something going on with my liver. They did blood work, and sure enough my liver enzymes were through the roof. They immediately wanted to transport me to see a transplant team. Still worrying about a hospital bill, my friend was nice enough to drive me all the way to Porter Adventist Hospital. Once I was admitted, they started to do tests to see what was killing my liver. My MELD score was over 40 when I got there. I had no idea the severity of the situation, it's like my mind was blocking every bad thought. After that week of testing, they still could not figure out how to treat me and on November 27th the team put me as a status 1 A, which means I would get the first liver available. After 2 days of waiting, they found a match! I had undergone 5 surgeries during my 41 days in the hospital. The new liver came from a middle aged man, 5'7, from Wichita Kansas. I wrote his family a letter thanking them for the selfless act he took of being a donor. My last surgery was in 2019 for 3 hernia repairs. They said that I would have not made it another night without that lifesaving miracle! My old liver had shrunk to about 1/4th its original size and folded over onto itself. Till this day, I still think that I got something from the jail that I was in, in Steamboat Springs. Unfortunately there is no way of proving such a thing. About a year later, my mom had mentioned that because I didn't have insurance, I wasn't able to fund a transplant, so the hospital was going to send me back home. Thank God my mom got me on Medicaid within that short amount of time. With all of the surgeries and time in the ICU, my hospital bills were well over a million! I am grateful to be here today to share my story and hopefully reach out to other people and bring hope and positivity! I am almost 4 years post op and I feel better than I ever have!

Living Donor Protection Act of 2021

Background

The "Living Donor Protection Act of 2021" was reintroduced in the 117th Congress by Representatives Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) & Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA) and Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) & Tom Cotton (R-Ark).

Where Did the Legislation Originate?

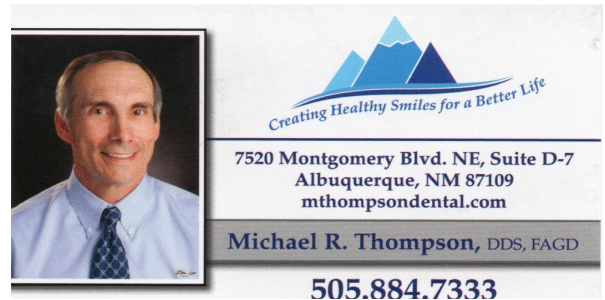
The AST's public policy team has worked alongside other national organ transplant stakeholder leader organizations as well as a bipartisan group of Congressional leaders to develop, introduce and further strengthen this important public policy proposal.

The national transplant advocacy community is now working together to drive the advancement of this key legislation through direct lobbying of Capitol Hill and encouraging grassroots contacts between association members (like yourselves) and their two U.S. Senators and one Member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

What Does the Legislation Do?

Under current law, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) does not specify that living organ donors can take unpaid leave to recover from their donation and does not guarantee that donors will have a job waiting for them after surgery. Further, according to a 2007 study in the American Journal of Transplantation, as many as 11 percent of living organ donors experience difficulty securing or paying for insurance after their procedures because of discriminatory practices. The Living Donor Protection Act of 2021 would protect living organ donors and promote organ donation in three easy, low-cost ways:

- Prohibit life, disability, and long term care insurance companies from denying or limiting coverage and from charging higher premiums for living organ donors;
- Clarify that living organ donors may use FMLA time to recover from the surgeries and procedures involved in donation; and
- Direct HHS to update their materials on live organ donation to reflect these new protections and encourage more individuals to consider donating an organ.



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OTAP Mission Statement

The mission of Organ Transplant Awareness Program is to promote organ donation and support transplant community members including transplant candidates, donor families, living organ donors, transplant recipients, and transplant families. We promote organ donation by participating in a variety of community events. Our support group meets once a month for those who need support or are seeking information about the transplant process.

