



Gift of Life



Mid-South Transplant Foundation, Inc.

Fall 2024

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MSTF Hosts Third Annual Radiothon



Mid-South Transplant Foundation hosted its third annual Organ & Tissue Donor Awareness Radiothon on Aug. 23 in honor of National Minority Donor Awareness Month (August). The Radiothon featured both recipient and donor family panels.

Panelists included kidney recipients Angela Gordon and Keyon Johnson; heart recipient Vera Milam Johnson; lung recipient Belinda Marshall; liver recipient Rev. Dr. Robert H. Washington, Sr., with Harris Memorial CME Church in Memphis and his wife, Memphis City Councilwoman Jana Swearingen-Washington; pancreas recipient Donna Haywood; cornea recipient Caprishia Davis; and donor hero family Amir and Charmagayne Akram.

Panel moderators were Dr. Telisa Franklin, MSTF Multicultural Relations Coordinator and President of the Memphis Juneteenth Festival, Pastor Ricky Floyd with Pursuit of God Church, Evangelist Donnie Briggs and Marceline Williams.

"It's important that the African American community hear from others in the African American community – my community – about donation," Franklin said. "National Minority Donor Awareness Month is the perfect time. I hope everyone who listened to the amazing stories of life and legacy understands how impactful donation is."

Franklin said four members of her family are alive today because of donation. Another

family member is waiting for a kidney.

"There's a lot of misinformation about donation, especially in minority communities. There's a lot out there that just isn't true," Franklin said. "The truth is donation saves lives. I've seen it in my own family. I always tell people the best 'yes' I ever gave in my life was when I gave God my heart and my soul, and my second best 'yes' was when I put that heart on my driver's license."

Mary Beck, MSTF Community Relations Coordinator and one of the event organizers, provided statistics for the MSTF service area, which includes 11 counties in Tennessee, 19 in Mississippi and six in Arkansas. "About 75% of the patients waiting for an organ in the MSTF service area are African American, and 80% of patients waiting for a kidney in our service area are African American," she said. "Just one person waiting is too many. We can help reduce these numbers by becoming registered donors."

Nationally, more than 100,000 Americans are waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant. Roughly, 4,000 of those are in the Mid-South (Arkansas, Mississippi and Tennessee), and more than 80% of those waiting are waiting for a kidney.

Panel discussions were broadcast on 1600AM radio and the Tuneln app. They can currently be found on the MSTF Facebook page.



MSTF, Pursuit of God Church Celebrate Minority Donor Awareness Month

In celebration of National Minority Donor Awareness Month (August), MSTF's Community Outreach Department was at Pursuit of God Church at 3759 N. Watkins St. in Memphis Sunday, Aug. 25, to help bring attention to donation. The Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness & Praise Celebration featured Dr. Telisa Franklin, MSTF's Multicultural Relations Coordinator. Franklin spoke to the congregation about the importance of donor registration in the African American community. MSTF also hosted an information/registration table at the event.



Pictured left to right are Randa Lipman, Zola Burgess, Melody Ramsey, Telisa Franklin, Pastor Sheila Floyd, Pastor Ricky Floyd, Mary Beck and ARTavius Veasey.

Miss Tennessee Champions Awareness

Carley Vogel, Miss Tennessee 2024, visited Memphis and MSTF Sept. 4 in support of organ and tissue donation. Vogel was diagnosed with an autoimmune liver disease 11 years ago at the age of 12 and is a spokesperson and advocate for donation. Vogel's stops in the Memphis area, in addition to MSTF, included Le Bonheur Children's Hospital, Methodist Transplant Institute, Tennessee Driver Services Center at 5266 Summer Ave. and Tennessee Highway Patrol Headquarters at 6348 Summer Ave.



Thank You to the Cordova Walmart Pharmacy & Vision Center

For the second consecutive year, the Cordova (TN) Walmart Pharmacy and Vision Center have selected MSTF as their Health & Wellness Day of Giving recipient. They generously awarded MSTF \$2,000 this year. The check was presented to MSTF in September. Pictured (left to right) are ARTavius Veasey, MSTF Digital Communications Coordinator; Mary Beck, MSTF Community Relations Coordinator; Janessa Jones, Cordova Walmart Vision Center Manager; Sharon Perdue, Cordova Walmart Pharmacy Manager; Kim Van Frank, MSTF Executive Director; Randa Lipman, MSTF Manager of Community Outreach; Melody Ramsey, MSTF Volunteer & Community Outreach Coordinator; and Zola Burgess, MSTF Community Outreach Coordinator.



Campaign Honors Local Donor Heroes

The Honoring Local Heroes campaign is a collaboration of MSTF and Tennessee Donor Services (Donate Life Tennessee) along with the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security. It is designed to honor local donor heroes, recognize local recipients and raise awareness for organ and tissue donation throughout Tennessee. The campaign was launched in June in Lexington and Dyersburg and features posters of donor heroes and recipients. The posters have been installed at Driver Services Centers throughout the state.

"Honoring Local Heroes gives us an opportunity to recognize those who have given the gift of life in their communities," said Zola Burgess, MSTF Community Outreach Coordinator. "The program helps us raise awareness about the importance of donation – the importance of saying 'yes' to donation when you come to get or renew your driver's license. 'Yes' changes lives."

Ninety-eight percent of all registered organ and tissue donors across the country register when they get or renew their driver's license.



Mimi Smith (left) and Angela and Kimmy Spann

Liver recipient Mimi Smith and donor family Angela and Kimmy Spann, along with their son, donor hero Tyler Spann shown in the poster, were honored at the Driver Services Center in Lexington on June 24. The Spann family and Smith have generously shared their stories as part of the campaign at other Tennessee Driver Services Centers as well.



Zola Burgess

Zola Burgess, MSTF Community Outreach Coordinator, works closely with the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security's Driver Services Division to promote organ and tissue donation. Mother and daughter recipients Jasmine (kidney) and Jada (heart) shown in the Honoring Local Heroes poster help community members understand the impact of donation.

MSTF Ambassadors Participate in Transplant Games

Three MSTF Ambassadors, Katie Lea, Amber Pettis and Mimi Smith, participated in the 2024 Transplant Games of America (TGA) in Birmingham, AL, in July. Smith is a liver recipient, and Pettis is a kidney recipient. Lea is a kidney donor.

Smith took part in the 5K Run/Walk, Cornhole and Lyrics for Life. This was her first year at TGA. "Participating in the Transplant Games of America in Birmingham was a huge accomplishment for me two years post-liver transplant," she said. "I was able to complete my first 5K after my transplant. I cried the last mile."

Pettis is a TGA veteran. The 2024 event is her fifth TGA. This year she medaled in nine events within her division and age group: Cycling 5K (gold), Bowling Doubles (gold), Bowling Mixed Doubles (bronze), 4 x 100 Relay (bronze), 100 Meter (bronze), 200 Meter (silver), 400 Meter (bronze), 5K (bronze) and Basketball (silver).

As with Smith, 2024 was Lea's first year at TGA. Lea, who is Vice-President, Chief Nursing Officer – University Hospital with Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare, participated in the 5K. "It was an honor to walk/run with recipients, donor families and members of the community," she said.

"I made new friends that I have remained in contact with since returning. I also met fellow Tennesseans who shared the same passion about organ donation as I do. We are collaborating together for support throughout the state for a Donate Life license plate," Lea said. "I traveled home inspired and even more committed to donor awareness."

Lea said she chose to participate in TGA for several reasons. "Why I chose to participate is multifold: to raise awareness for donation and the impact on patients and families; honor donors and their families; and share my story of being an altruistic kidney donor at 55 years old and living my best life post-donation."

Congratulations to Lea, Pettis and Smith.



Ambassadors Mimi Smith (left) and Katie Lea



Ambassador Amber Pettis



Art and Donation Worlds Mingle

ARTavious Veasey, MSTF Digital Communications Coordinator, wears multiple hats that reflect his dedication to both donation and the art world. He is the founder and editor-in-chief of the award-winning local magazine, *ARTist Feature*. He is also a kidney recipient, as is his mother, Ambassador Tremetrius Barnes. Veasey's connection to donation does not end there. His father, Archie Veasey, is his living kidney donor, and his brother, Reginald Smith, Jr., who died in 2018, is a donor hero.

At the four-year anniversary party for Veasey's magazine on Aug. 11, Veasey brought the two worlds together. He invited his MSTF Community Outreach team to the event and introduced his guests to MSTF.

"I'm always excited to bring together different parts of my life when the moment feels right," Veasey said. "While many in my art community know me through the magazine and my acting career, few are aware that I'm also a kidney recipient."



Veasey and his mother are part of Donate Life Tennessee's new Honoring Local Heroes campaign. Veasey said the campaign inspired such a moment. An audience of more than 100 party attendees heard Veasey's story, saw the Honoring Local Heroes poster featuring Veasey and Barnes and learned about MSTF.

"By sharing my transplant story and highlighting the transformative work we're doing at MSTF, I aimed to inspire positivity around organ donation, especially within a predominantly Black audience, with the hope that they would consider becoming donors or spread the word about the importance of organ donation."

The timing was superb. August is National Minority Donor Awareness Month.

MSTF Supports Race for Reconciliation



MSTF participated in the third annual Unite Memphis Race for Reconciliation on Sept. 2, Labor Day, in downtown Memphis. MSTF was an event sponsor and hosted a race team.

Juneteenth Walk/Run

MSTF sponsored this year's 2.5-mile Memphis Juneteenth Freedom Walk/Run on June 15. The walk/run was the perfect way to celebrate with the community and help raise awareness about organ and tissue donation.





School is in Session!

MSTF participated in back-to-school events in July and August. MSTF Ambassadors provided not only donation information and an opportunity for community members to register as donors but also gave away back-to-school supplies. In addition, Mary Beck, MSTF's Community Relations Coordinator, visited the Marion (AR) School District as part of MSTF's back-to-school outreach. She presented teachers with classroom supplies.



MSTF Celebrates Juneteenth 2024

MSTF Office Manager Linda McGuire and Executive Director Kim Van Frank, along with other staff members, attended the Memphis Juneteenth Freedom Luncheon on June 13. MSTF's Multicultural Relations Coordinator, Dr. Telisa Franklin, is president of the Memphis Juneteenth Festival.



Thank You to MSTF Stakeholders

MSTF strives for continuous improvement as an organization. To facilitate that goal, the organization has partnered with Stratex Solutions, an expert in stakeholder engagement and strategic planning. The partnership will help MSTF maximize its performance and better align its everyday work with its mission, which is to improve lives through organ and tissue donation. One of the steps in the process is to listen to stakeholders, as their insights, perspectives and experiences matter. MSTF, through Stratex, recently conducted an anonymous survey of its stakeholders, including customers, partners, donor families, Ambassadors and employees, to gather this critical information. Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey. Your responses will help MSTF make informed decisions and drive positive change in the transplantation landscape. Together you and MSTF can achieve great things.



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Help Bring Donate Life Specialty Plate to Tennessee

Efforts are underway to create a Donate Life Tennessee specialty license plate, and your help is needed. To advance the specialty plate initiative, Donate Life Tennessee must have commitments to purchase 1,000 plates.

Help bring this plate to Tennessee and raise awareness for the lifesaving benefits of donation by committing to purchase a Donate Life Tennessee license plate for your vehicle(s) today. Please scan the QR code and complete the short form to make your commitment.



<http://go.dcmds.org/DonateLifeTNLicensePlate>

After the 1,000-plate minimum is met and the Tennessee General Assembly has approved the initiative, you will be contacted to prepurchase the plate. The specialty plate fee is approximately \$37 per year. Email DLTNinfo@dcids.org for more information.

Donate Life Tennessee is a collaboration of MSTF and Tennessee Donor Services.

Spotlight



Dawne McBride

Tina Hill

Dawne McBride, Donation Support Coordinator – Tissue, and Tina Hill, Family Donation Coordinator – Organ, have received MSTF Hope and Life Recognition Awards for their exceptional work with donor families during the second quarter of 2024.