



# Gift of Life



Mid-South Transplant Foundation, Inc.

Spring 2025

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## Heart to Heart: Recipients, Donor Families Celebrate Life, Honor Heroes

Feb. 14, Valentine's Day, celebrates love. No place was love more apparent on Valentine's Day this year than at the Heart to Heart: Honoring the Gift of Life event at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis.

On Valentine's Day, which is also appropriately National Donor Day, nine heart recipients and their donors' families met for the first time. Heart to Heart was an opportunity to celebrate life, legacy and second chances and to honor donor heroes and their families. It is the largest known meeting of its kind.

The event was organized by Mid-South Transplant Foundation (MSTF) and the Baptist Heart Institute at Baptist Memorial Hospital - Memphis. The Baptist Heart Institute has performed almost 500 adult heart transplants since 1985 and, in October, will mark the 40th anniversary of the first heart transplant in the Mid-South.

The event was hosted by Action News 5 (WMC-TV) Chief Meteorologist Ron Childers. Childers' mother, Frances, was among the early recipients transplanted at Baptist. She received a heart in 1994.

Recipients at the event included MSTF

Ambassador Liam Haggerty. Haggerty met Heather Price and her family. Price's son, Thomas (Logan) Arnold, was Haggerty's donor hero in September 2021. He was 22 years old.

"Meeting the family of my heart donor, Logan, was probably the most emotional moment and hours of my life," Haggerty said. "It was very surreal, expressing my thanks and gratitude to them, as my life was saved, while, at the same time, grieving with them over the loss of their child, brother and the center of their family. I will never forget that day." No one present at Heart to Heart will ever forget that day.

"It was an honor to be part of Heart to Heart," said Kim Van Frank, MSTF Executive Director. "I don't think there was a dry eye there. It was an emotional day. MSTF works with families on the worst day of their lives. They have lost their spouse, child, parent or other loved one, and the generosity, courage and kindness they show through the grief is nothing short of miraculous. It is truly awe-inspiring. We thank them. We thank all our donor families every day."



On Feb. 14, Valentine's Day and National Donor Day, MSTF Ambassador Liam Haggerty met Heather Price, the mother of donor hero Logan Arnold, whose gift gave Haggerty a second chance at life.



The 2025 Heart to Heart event is the largest known meeting of heart recipients and donor families.



## 'Yes You Should' Campaign Underway

Should you register to be a donor? Yes, you should. MSTF launched its Yes You Should (YYS) multimedia campaign in January to raise awareness for organ donation and increase registered donors in the African American community and throughout the Mid-South. The campaign kicked off with a red-carpet reception Jan. 28 at Junior Achievement of Memphis and the Mid-South. It features a host of local community standouts ranging from a state senator to a student athlete.

Ephie Johnson, President and CEO of Neighborhood Christian Centers, Inc., is one of those local standouts supporting YYS. "I understand and appreciate the need for a transplant," Johnson said. "I actually have some people that are close to me that have needed a transplant or they're not going to make it."

Johnson also understands the critical, generous role donors play. "I think that it's important that we think about other people and realize that others need us, and if we can serve in this way, if it's our time to transition out of here and our organs are healthy, then we want to be able to leave that behind to help somebody else."

Gina Neely, host of Bluff City Life, shares Johnson's belief about the significance of helping others through donation. "We all have to come and go, but if you go, why not leave a blessing and save someone else?"

LaDell Beamon, CEO of Heal the Hood Foundation of Memphis, shared the story of his uncle, a kidney recipient. "You know, something that I found out before I was even invited to be a part of (the YYS campaign), my uncle literally, if it wasn't for an organ donor for him, he would have lost his life because he needed a kidney transplant." Beamon said his uncle was on the waiting list for about two years and

that he knows others who are waiting now for a transplant.

ARTavius Veasey, artist, entrepreneur and founder and editor-in chief of *ARTist Feature Magazine*, spoke directly to the African American community about the YYS campaign at the launch event.

"Specifically for the Memphis community, I would really like the Black community to take heed and to register to be donors. I want them to see that it affects us a lot, and I want them to understand that it's important. I know there's a lot of misconceptions and negativity around donation, but I want you to encourage and educate yourself from reliable resources about what organ and tissue donation really is."

Thirteen-year-old student and athlete Laila Scruggs explained her hope for the campaign in perhaps the most straightforward way. "I just really hope it helps everybody, inspires everybody to do right, do the right thing."

Others participating in the campaign to save lives are Raumesh Akbari, Tennessee State Senator; Dr. Telisa Franklin, President

and CEO of Memphis Juneteenth; Lee Harris, Shelby County Mayor; Tyrone Hunt, Pastor with The Healing Cathedral Christian Church; Ladia Yates, choreographer and entrepreneur; and Paul Young, Memphis City Mayor.

"I want to thank the incredible individuals – these community leaders, influencers and standouts – who are helping us share the message of donation through the Yes You Should campaign," said MSTF Executive Director Kim Van Frank. "We are honored that they gave their time and talent to this cause. Their generous efforts will change lives, and we are so grateful."

Watch for these familiar faces on local television stations, billboards, streaming services and social media platforms. Go to <https://bit.ly/4hHrV2V> to view a sample of the campaign videos.

In the MSTF service area, which includes 11 counties in Tennessee, 19 in Mississippi and six in Arkansas, 75% of the patients waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant are African American. The overwhelming majority of those patients are waiting for a kidney. Nationally, more than 80% of individuals on the transplant waiting list are there for a kidney. Conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure can lead to kidney failure. Unfortunately, these conditions are common, especially in the African American community.

Overall, more than 100,000 Americans are waiting for an organ transplant. Every day 16 people die because the organ they needed did not come in time. The good news is that one person – one donor hero – can save up to eight lives through organ donation and improve the quality of life for 75 or more through tissue donation. You can be one of those heroes. Should you register to be an organ donor? **Yes, you should.** Go to [www.YesYouShouldMidSouth.org](http://www.YesYouShouldMidSouth.org) today to say "yes" to donation. Registration is fast, easy and can be life-changing.







## 'Yes You Should'



# Blue & Green Day Mid-South Set for April 11

Circle April 11 on your calendar. **April 11 is Blue & Green Day (BGD)**. For anyone new to BGD, it is part of National Donate Life Month (NDLM), which is celebrated each April. NDLM was established by Donate Life America and its partnering organizations in 2003 to help raise awareness for donation, encourage Americans to register as donors and honor donor heroes.

In the MSTF service area, BGD is recognized as **Blue & Green Day Mid-South**. On this day, MSTF and its community partners help raise awareness by turning communities Blue & Green.

How can you turn a community Blue & Green? The possibilities are endless. Here are a few examples. Buildings and homes can be lit up in Blue & Green on April 11. Families/individuals and

businesses/organizations can display BGD Mid-South yard signs. BGD participants can decorate their cars or offices. Individuals, employee groups, churches, schools and others can wear Blue & Green. **(BGD Mid-South T-shirts are available to purchase from the MSTF website. Orders must be placed before midnight on March 26. To order, visit [www.MidSouthTransplant.org](http://www.MidSouthTransplant.org).)**

The first step to supporting BGD Mid-South is registration. Please visit the MSTF website to register as a family/individual or business/organization. Registration is simple and takes only a minute. Official registrants will receive BGD Mid-South materials. Families/individuals will get a yard sign to display. Businesses/organizations will receive a BGD toolkit. Everything is on a first-come, first-served basis while supplies last, so you are encouraged to register today. Registration is free and open to all. Registration allows MSTF to track participation. Without registration, MSTF will not know how many are supporting BGD Mid-South.

On BGD, all participants should take photos of their celebration – their decorated car, office building in Blue & Green lights, BGD luncheon, etc. – and post those photos online, tagging MSTF and using **#BlueGreenDayMidSouth**. Tagging and use of **#BlueGreenDayMidSouth** will allow MSTF to find those posts.

More information can be found on the MSTF website, [www.MidSouthTransplant.org](http://www.MidSouthTransplant.org). MSTF needs your help to make BGD Mid-South 2025 the biggest and best event to date. While this day is fun, it is also serious business. Raising awareness for organ and tissue donation saves lives. Help save lives in 2025. Register as a participant today.

**BLUE & GREEN DAY**  
MID-SOUTH

#BlueGreenDayMidSouth  
**BLUE & GREEN DAY**  
MID-SOUTH

**TSHIRTS AVAILABLE NOW**  
**DEADLINE: MARCH 26TH**

Visit [www.MidSouthTransplant.org](http://www.MidSouthTransplant.org) to order.  
Go to the T-Shirt option under the Blue & Green Day drop-down menu.



## Just Around the Corner!

SAVE THE DATE



APRIL 11, 2025

**BLUE &  
GREEN DAY**

**MID-SOUTH**

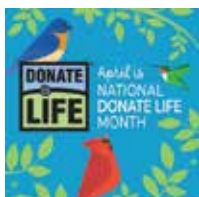
WE NEED YOUR HELP TURNING THE  
MID-SOUTH **BLUE & GREEN!**



Scan QR code with your phone  
and **register today!**



[www.MidSouthTransplant.org](http://www.MidSouthTransplant.org)



## Donate Life Month Celebrations in April

- Living Donor Day: April 2
- Blue & Green Day: April 11
- Pediatric Transplant Week: April 20-26







## Families Commemorate Gift of Life

This is a story that began in tragedy yet united two families in love, hope and healing. In June 2018, the unthinkable happened. Reggie Smith Jr., only 24,



was killed in a car accident. Smith left behind a grieving family. He also generously left behind the precious gift of life. Smith was an organ and tissue donor. His gifts changed lives that day. Ebony Jordan's was one of them. She received a kidney. Jordan had been on dialysis for about 30 years and on the transplant list about six months.

On Dec. 11, 2024, Jordan met Smith's family – Smith's mother, MSTF Ambassador Tremetrius Barnes, and his brother, MSTF Digital Communications Coordinator Artavius

Veasey – for the first time. Barnes and Veasey are both kidney recipients. Barnes received her kidney 27 years ago. Veasey received his 20 years ago from a living donor, his father, Archie Veasey. Smith was inspired by his family to register as a donor. That loving decision made him a donor hero.



*Pictured left to right: Artavius Veasey, Ebony Jordan and Tremetrius Barnes.*

The emotional meeting took place at Methodist University Hospital in Memphis and marked a full-circle moment for Smith's family, celebrating what would have been Smith's 31st birthday.

## OUR IMPACT IN 2024

Every gift saved and enhanced the lives of many in the Mid-South.

**105**  
Organ Donors



**277**  
Organs Transplanted



**337**  
Tissue Donors



MSTF wants to recognize and thank its key partner groups, including MSTF staff; MSTF ambassadors; donor families; physicians; nurses; other patient care personnel; donor hospital personnel; transplant center employees; department of motor vehicles, county clerk and highway patrol office employees; medical examiners; coroners; and funeral home staff.

MSTF is able to achieve its mission through your continued support, collaboration and feedback.



8001 Centerview Parkway, Suite 302  
Cordova, TN 38018



**ARE YOU A REGISTERED ORGAN & TISSUE DONOR?**  
In honor of National Donor Day, SHOW ME YOUR HEART on your driver's license – that you're a registered organ and tissue donor – and receive a discount and/or swag at the following participating partners:

<b>ALREADY SCRAP METAL PICKUP SERVICES LLC</b> Tavernish Wilson 901-495-5789 alreadyscrappmetal@gmail.com 10% OFF ANY SERVICES \$100+	<b>VEE VEE'S CLEANING SERVICES</b> Memphis 901-489-5191 veevsdesignservice@gmail.com FREE CLEANING OF OVEN, REFRIGERATOR OR BASEBOARDS
<b>YARD POPUPS</b> WWW.YARDPOPPUPS.COM FREE ADDITIONAL DAY RENTAL MONTH OF FEBRUARY	<b>ALPHA OMEGA MONUMENTS</b> 2900 Collier Ave. Memphis, TN 38108 15% OFF MONUMENT ORDER OR 10% OFF MEMORIAL CELEBRATION PROGRAM (optional)
<b>J'S SOUL FOOD AND GRILL</b> 3556 Charles Ave. Memphis, TN 38108 FREE DESSERT	<b>BATESVILLE NUTRITION</b> 534 Hwy. 51 South Batesville, MS 38604 \$1 OFF YOUR PURCHASE
<b>FABULOUS FLAVORS &amp; FRIENDS DINER RESTAURANT</b> 2004 E. Brooks Rd. Memphis, TN 38116 FREE BEVERAGE OR HONEY BUTTER WAFFLE	<b>MEMPHIS TOAST</b> 954 Jackson Ave. Memphis, TN 38107 FREE WAFFLE WITH HEART-SHAPED STRAWBERRY
<b>BUTTERBUFF BAKERY &amp; CAFE</b> 4835 S. 2nd St. Memphis, TN 38103 FREE HEART-SHAPED COOKIES	



Register Today to be an Organ and Tissue Donor  
Give hope. Give life.



## Area Businesses Support 'Show Me Your Heart Month' 2025

MSTF celebrated Show Me Your Heart Month (SMYHM) in February. SMYHM honors National Donor Day on Feb. 14, Valentine's Day. Area businesses supported SMYHM by offering discounts or giveaways to customers who showed the heart on their driver's licenses, indicating a registered donor status. MSTF thanks everyone who celebrated donor heroes and helped raise awareness for organ and tissue donation by participating in SMYHM 2025.

## Spotlight

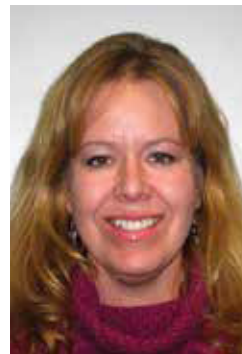
Emma Smith, Donation Support Coordinator – Tissue, and Tina Hill, Beth Larsen and Cynthia Richmond, all Family Donation Coordinators – Organ, have received MSTF Hope and Life Recognition Awards for their exceptional work with donor families during the fourth quarter of 2024.



Emma Smith



Tina Hill



Beth Larsen



Cynthia Richmond