



Gift of Life



Mid-South Transplant Foundation, Inc.

Fall 2025

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Coffee & Conversations Program Creates Opportunities for Learning



August, National Minority Donor Awareness Month (NMDAM), was the perfect time for great coffee and meaningful conversations. On Aug. 21 Mid-South Transplant Foundation (MSTF) hosted its first Coffee & Conversations event at Cxffeeblack's second location at 3386 Bowen Ave. in Memphis.

The event was designed to foster discussion about the impact of donation and transplantation in the Mid-South community, honor NMDAM and encourage diversity. "We want everyone in our community to understand that donation affects them," said Mary Beck, MSTF Community Relations Coordinator. "It's a multicultural issue." About 60% of the 100,000 individuals on the national transplant waiting list are from racial and ethnic minority groups, according to July 2025 data from the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN).

Coffee & Conversations provided a safe space to talk about organ and tissue donation candidly, share transplant experiences, ask questions and learn new things. It also gave many attendees an opportunity to meet others who are walking similar paths in their experiences as recipients or donor family members.

Ambassadors Rockie Smith and Latrice McClinton, both double-lung recipients, were part of Coffee & Conversations.

"Coffee & Conversations was such a wonderful event," Smith said. "Seeing people who look like me being afforded the second chance (through donation) at continuing to impact those around us made my heart glad." She also expressed appreciation for the connections she made at the event with others who had "traveled the same transplant journey."

McClinton too remarked on the journey shared by those with links to transplant. "Meeting others who have walked the journey of organ transplants – both recipients and a (living) donor – reminded me that we are all connected by resilience, gratitude and the gift of life."

"We appreciate everyone who was there for our first Coffee & Conversations," Beck said. "Good coffee with good conversation is a powerful partnership. We'll continue to look for ways to bring the community together on this topic."

MSTF thanks Cxffeeblack for its hospitality and support. Cxffeeblack is a community-oriented, multi-disciplinary, education-based coffee company. *(continued on page 2)*



School Days are Here Again

MSTF once again made back-to-school events part of its community outreach program in July and August. MSTF staff and Ambassadors provided donation information; an opportunity for community members to register as donors; and school supplies for students in the MSTF service area.

"Certainly, we want to get the word out about organ and tissue donation," said Mary Beck, MSTF Community Relations Coordinator, "but it's also important to be a good neighbor and community partner."

MSTF participated in 10 back-to-school events in West Memphis, AR; Wynne, AR; Horn Lake, MS; Bartlett, TN; Mason, TN; and Memphis.



Thank You to Walmart Pharmacy, Vision Center

MSTF thanks the Cordova (TN) Walmart Pharmacy and Vision Center for their generosity. For the third consecutive year, the Pharmacy and Vision Center have selected MSTF as their Health & Wellness Day of Giving recipient. They presented MSTF with a \$2,000 award in July.



Pictured (L to R) are ARTavius Veasey, MSTF Digital Communications Coordinator; Melody Ramsey, MSTF Volunteer & Community Outreach Coordinator; Richard Edmondson, MSTF Ambassador; Sharon Perdue, Cordova Walmart Pharmacy Manager; Janessa Jones, Cordova Walmart Vision Center Manager; Zola Burgess, MSTF Community Outreach Coordinator; and Randa Lipman, MSTF Manager of Community Outreach.

Coffee & Conversations Program (continued from page 1)



Standing row (L to R): Tremetrius Barnes, kidney recipient and donor mom; Sara Beth Silverman, kidney-pancreas recipient; Latrice McClinton, double-lung recipient; Cheri Wells, living, non-related kidney donor; Rockie Smith, double-lung recipient; Ellen Garner, kidney recipient; and Shirley Branch, donor family member. Front row: ARTavius Veasey, kidney recipient and donor family member.

It was founded in 2019 by a husband-and-wife team, Bartholomew Jones and Renata Henderson. Cxffeeblack is on a mission to return coffee to its African roots and became a trailblazer in the coffee industry by creating an all-Black coffee supply chain from Ethiopia to Memphis, according to the company's website.

NMDAM grew from National Minority Donor Awareness Week, founded in 1996 by the National Minority Organ Tissue Transplant Education Program (MOTTEP) and Clive Callender, M.D., to raise awareness about health disparities and the impact of organ donation and transplantation in minority communities.



Community Outreach Meets with Community Partners in Arkansas, Mississippi



Randa Lipman, MSTF Manager of Community Outreach, and Zola Burgess, MSTF Community Outreach Coordinator, participated in an annual training meeting for the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration's driver's licensing offices. The meeting was held in Hot Springs, AR, in July.

Lipman and Burgess, as part of Donate Life Mississippi, also participated in the Mississippi Driver Service Bureau Annual Training and Awards event in Canton, MS, in June.

Nationally, more than 90% of donor registrations occur when people get or renew their driver's license, driver's permit or state identification card.

MSTF Honors Unity

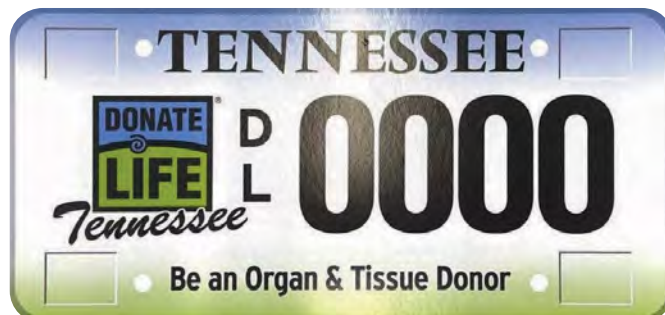
MSTF participated in the 2025 Unite Memphis Race, a 5K and one-mile walk/run that began at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, on Sept. 1. The Unite Memphis race is held annually to remind the Memphis community of the work that needs to be done each day to bring healing, honor and hope to the city, according to the event website.

Pictured (L to R) are Burgess; Rhonda Woods, Branch Manager of the Marion (AR) Revenue Office; and Shay Hood, Branch Manager of the Earle (AR) Revenue Office.



Pictured (L to R) are Tremetrius Barnes, MSTF Ambassador; ARTavius Veasey, Digital Communications Coordinator; Mary Beck, Community Relations Coordinator; Jaleesa Wright, HLA Technologist II; Laquisha Reed, Quality Assurance - Compliance Coordinator; and Reed's sister, Laquita Reed.

Order Your Donate Life Tennessee License Plate



Show your support for donation today. The Donate Life Tennessee license plate is available for order at <http://go.dcmds.org/DonateLifeTNLicensePlate>.

MSTF Teams with Memphis Fire Department



MSTF Community Outreach Coordinator Zola Burgess spent four days, Aug. 19-22, with the City of Memphis Fire Department sharing the message of donation during the department's Emergency Medical Services Refresher program.

Community Outreach on Air

Mary Beck (right), MSTF Community Relations Coordinator, and Randa Lipman, Manager of Community Outreach, were interviewed by WDIA radio host Stormy Taylor on Aug. 21. Beck and Lipman attended an iHeartRadio customer appreciation event, and Beck won a short radio interview as a door prize. What did they discuss? Donation, of course.





MSTF Celebrates Donor Sabbath in November



Spotlight



Emma Smith



Zola Burgess

Emma Smith, Donation Support Coordinator – Tissue, and Zola Burgess, Family Advocate – Organ, have received MSTF Hope and Life Recognition Awards for their exceptional work with donor families during the second quarter of 2025. Burgess is also the Community Relations Coordinator in the Community Outreach Department.