



Gift of Life



Mid-South Transplant Foundation, Inc.

Spring 2026

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Get Ready for Donate Life Month, Blue & Green Day Mid-South

Mark your calendars. April is National Donate Life Month (NDLM). NDLM was established by Donate Life America (DLA) and its partnering organizations in 2003. It is designed to raise awareness for donation, encourage individuals to register as donors and honor those who have changed lives as donor heroes.

Each year, DLA creates a theme for NDLM. This year's theme focuses on trees as a symbol for life and connection. The DLA website explains the theme: "Just like trees grow and support each other in a forest, donation connects people – donors, recipients and their families. Like a tree that grows and stands for generations, a donor's gift leaves a lasting legacy of hope and life."

Within the month of April, several special days are recognized.

- Donate Life Living Donor Day, April 1
- Blue & Green Spirit Week, April 4-11
- Blue & Green Day, April 10
- National Pediatric Transplant Week, April 19-25

More information about these dates can be found at

<https://donatelife.net/how-you-can-help/national-observances-celebrations/ndlm/>.

MSTF honors each of these days. Blue & Green Day, however, presents a unique opportunity to engage a broad mix of communities, businesses, organizations and individuals in spotlighting organ and tissue donation. It is celebrated as **Blue & Green Day Mid-South** in the MSTF service area. Please visit the MSTF website at <https://midsouthtransplant.org/blue-green-day/> to learn how

you can be a part of this celebration of hope, life and legacy. Register as a participant today. Blue & Green Day Mid-South registration is free and open to all.

On the evening of April 10, Whiskey Jill's in Memphis (6160 Macon Road) is hosting a Blue & Green Day Mid-South Celebration from 7 p.m. to midnight. Admission is \$9 for those 21 and older. It is \$15-\$20 for those aged 18-20. However, anyone who shows that he or she is a registered donor (heart on the driver's license) will get a \$2 discount. Dance lessons and giveaways will be part of the event. MSTF would love to see you there.





MSTF and Southern Legacy of Life Submit Merger Application



MSTF and Southern Legacy of Life (SLL) in Arkansas have formally submitted a merger application to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), representing a significant step toward creating a unified organ procurement organization serving Arkansas, western Tennessee and northern Mississippi.

"This submission reflects our shared commitment to strengthening donation and transplantation services across our region and advancing our mission to save and heal more lives through organ and tissue donation," said Mark Tudor, President and CEO of SLL.

"After nearly two years of intentional planning and teamwork, this represents major progress toward full integration," said Kim Van Frank, MSTF's Executive Director. "As CMS conducts its review, our teams remain focused on delivering uninterrupted, high-quality service to donor families, transplant partners and the communities we serve."

The proposed merger reflects a shared vision to align operations, enhance clinical performance and expand donation opportunities while continuing to honor the generosity of donors and their families. SLL and MSTF will provide regular updates as the CMS process and pending approval move forward.

SLL, headquartered in Little Rock, AR, was founded in 1987 as the Arkansas Regional Organ Recovery Agency (ARORA) and serves 65 counties in Arkansas.



Organization Begins Year-Long Quest to Register Donors



The Phi Lambda Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (AKA) is on a year-long mission to register 1,908 organ and tissue donors, and MSTF has been asked to help.

Why 1,908? AKA was founded in 1908 at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

On Saturday, Jan. 10, the chapter hosted a panel discussion about donation at Southwind High School in Memphis. Dr. Telisa Franklin, MSTF's Multicultural Relations Coordinator, moderated the discussion. MSTF Community Outreach Coordinator Zola Burgess and MSTF Tissue Recovery Technician and Ambassador Kellie Dear, liver recipient, were panelists. Other panelists included MSTF Ambassadors Stacy Hobson, recipient of a living kidney donation; Angela London, donor mom; and Latrice McClinton, double-lung recipient, along with Dr. David Conner, Medical Director for Baptist DeSoto Memorial Hospital and Co-Regional Director for TeamHealth.

The Phi Lambda Omega Chapter presented MSTF with a \$500 check at the event.

HLA Lab Participates in Sampling Investigation for IHIWS

The MSTF HLA Laboratory was selected to participate in a comparative sampling investigation to be presented at the International HLA & Immunogenetics Workshop (IHIWS) in Japan in May 2027. Brett Loehmann, Manager of the HLA Lab, said that the MSTF lab is "one of a few number" of laboratories conducting HLA typing on deceased donors with next-generation sequencing using nanopore technology from Oxford Nanopore Technologies (ONT).

Seventy-two DNA samples were divided among MSTF lab staff and tested. Results are now being reviewed and will be submitted to IHIWS. The results using nanopore technology will be compared with those derived from other testing methods.



Faralee Garland, HLA Technologist II, demonstrates typing using nanopore technology from ONT.



MSTF Staffer Meets Former Vice President Harris

Dr. Telisa Franklin, MSTF Multicultural Relations Coordinator, met former U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris at a reception honoring Harris in Memphis on Jan. 15. Harris visited Memphis as part of her national book tour for "107 Days."

Liver Recipient Shares Journey

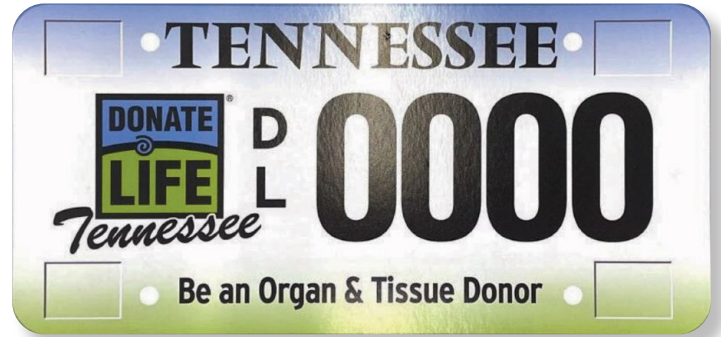
Kellie Dear, MSTF Tissue Recovery Technician and Ambassador, shared her experience as a liver recipient with the WLOK radio audience on Jan. 13. Dear and MSTF Community Outreach Coordinator Zola Burgess were featured on the "Let's Talk About It" morning show hosted by Chip Washington. Dear received her transplant April 19, 2025.





MSTF Celebrates King Day 2026

MSTF participated in the National Civil Rights Museum’s King Day 2026 celebration on Jan. 19. This year’s event marked the 40th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr. Day observed as a federal holiday. Ambassadors Shemeka Malone and Shirley Branch managed the MSTF information and registration table at the event, while Dr. Telisa Frankin, Multicultural Relations Coordinator, introduced MSTF to the crowd at King Day. Franklin and MSTF Community Outreach Coordinator Zola Burgess attended the morning prayer breakfast honoring the late civil rights leader.



Order Your Donate Life TN License Plate Today

Show your support for organ and tissue donation by ordering the Donate Life Tennessee license plate today. The plate will go into production only if 1,000 plates are presold by late June. To order your plate, go to <https://tennesseedonor.org/get-involved/donate-life-tn-license-plate/>.

MSTF Ambassadors Honored by National Kidney Foundation



MSTF Volunteer & Community Outreach Coordinator Melody Ramsey presents the National Kidney Foundation’s Legacy of Life Kidney Transplant Award to Thomas Garrison.

Ambassadors Thomas Garrison and Quiley Cox were two of the three individuals honored by the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) at its 2026 Soiree for Kidneys on March 14 at the Memphis Botanic Garden.

Garrison, the recipient of the NKF Legacy of Life Kidney Transplant Award, received a lifesaving kidney transplant in 1981. The kidney, a living donation from his brother, has sustained Garrison for more than four decades. He was introduced for the award by MSTF Volunteer

& Community Outreach Coordinator Melody Ramsey. Cox, the recipient of the NKF Supporter Award, was honored for his commitment to kidney health and longtime support of NKF. He received his kidney in 2009.

Beverly Robertson, also a kidney recipient, was awarded the NKF Transplant Leadership & Impact Award. She is the COO of Trust Marketing and past President and CEO of the Greater Memphis Chamber.

Photos courtesy of NKF.



MSTF Ambassador Thomas Garrison, Beverly Robertson and MSTF Ambassador Quiley Cox were honored by the National Kidney Foundation on March 14.

Any Age is the Right Age to be a Hero

Many people, at a certain age, believe their time to give is gone. They think they age out of donation. They think they are too old, so there is no reason for them to register as organ and tissue donors. Fortunately, what they are thinking is WRONG. In the donation world, “any age is the right age” is a well-known phrase, and it is easy to discover why.

One-hundred-year-old Dale Steele of Pierce, NE, became a donor hero when he died in February 2026. Steele, a WWII veteran whose service included deployment in Nuremberg, Germany, was able to perform one more heroic act at the end of his life; he donated his liver. Steele’s story was shared by Live On Nebraska.

Steele is not alone in becoming a donor well beyond the age most people believe it is possible to do so. In 2024, the AP shared the story of 98-year-old Poplar Bluff, MO, resident Orville Allen. Allen, who died in May 2024, also became a donor hero.

He saved the life of a 72-year-old woman. Allen, a veteran of WWII and the Korean War, donated his liver.

In 2021, CNN reported that 95-year-old Cecil Lockhart of Welch, WV, saved a life through the gift of donation. Lockhart, who died in May 2021, was also a WWII veteran and also donated his liver.

In October 2025, a 75-year-old became a donor hero, again through the gift of a liver. MSTF recovered the gift, and the individual is MSTF’s oldest organ donor to date.

“Donations like these are not everyday occurrences,” said MSTF Executive Director Kim Van Frank. “They are exceptional, but they demonstrate why we say any age is the right age to say ‘yes’ to donation. Medical suitability is determined at the time of death by multiple factors and not simply your birth date.”

To read more about some of the donor heroes in this article, please review the links below.

<https://liveonnebraska.org/news/nebraska-veteran-becomes-oldest-organ-donor-in-us/>

<https://apnews.com/article/98-year-old-liver-donation-oldest-organ-b582a0cd003e3e0dd421ab51b6de668d>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/05/12/health/oldest-organ-donor-wellness-trnd>



Honor Your Hero

To learn how your loved one can be part of the Donor Hero Remembrance Garden, visit <https://aopo.org/donor-remembrance-day/donor-hero-garden/>.

Donor Remembrance Day

Join us to honor and celebrate our Donor Heroes who have given the gift of life through organ, tissue, and eye donation. Together we "plant" forget-me-not flowers to symbolize that these heroes and their gifts will always be remembered.

April 30th

www.aopo.org/donor-remembrance-day
#DonorRemembranceDay

AOPO ASSOCIATION OF ORGAN PROCUREMENT ORGANIZATIONS
DONATE LIFE RegisterMe.org

Spotlight

Emma Smith, Donation Support Coordinator – Tissue; Beth Larsen, Family Donation Coordinator – Organ; Kevin Rhodes, Family Donation Coordinator – Organ; and Lauren Patton, Donation Partner Specialist, a contract employee, have received Hope and Life Recognition Awards for their exceptional work with donor families during the fourth quarter of 2025.

WHISKEY JILL'S presents

BLUE & GREEN DAY
MID-SOUTH
Celebration

IN SUPPORT OF ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION AWARENESS

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2026 | 6160 MACON RD. MEMPHIS, TN 38134

DOORS OPEN AT 7PM

21 & UP COVER	18-20 COVER	18-20 COVER
\$9.00	\$15.00	\$20.00
	BEFORE 9PM	AFTER 9PM

IF YOU'RE A REGISTERED ORGAN & TISSUE DONOR, YOU RECEIVE \$2.00 OFF YOUR COVER

COUNTRY SWING LESSONS AT 7:30
LINE DANCING LESSONS AT 8:30

PRIZE GIVEAWAYS THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT

WHISKEY JILL'S