



DONATE LIFE CONNECTICUT ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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GENTLE STRENGTH:

*Images of Generosity, Hope, and
New Life through Transplant*

My son, my only child, Jerrell, was wise beyond his years and touched so many people in his 16 short years of life. He was a gift to me from God and in turn gave the gift of life back to several people through organ donation.
~Carolyn, Donor Mom

A Message from the Executive Director

Donate Life Connecticut (DLC) is dedicated to educating and raising awareness among all Connecticut residents about the lifesaving and life-enhancing benefits of organ and tissue donation. We are also dedicated to increasing the number of registered organ donors and champions of living donation.

In 2024, we started the year with a very special early screening event of the Lionsgate Film “Ordinary Angels,” starring Hilary Swank. We not only filled a theater at the Plainville AMC, but we also invited living donor Lawrence Lewis from Vermont to surprise his recipient, 5-year-old Raul Torres, and the Torres family before the film began. The heart-warming surprise meeting was caught on camera and film, and a story on WFSB aired that evening.

In April, we created a photo series for Donate Life Month called “Gentle Strength: Images of Generosity, Hope & New Life.” The series featured 30 people affected by transplant and donation. Each black and white image was featured with its personal story during the month of April. The series was also displayed on the screens throughout the Hartford Healthcare system, at the West Farms Mall, and the DMV. A slideshow of the images was created and set to a Grammy-Award winning song “Just Like That” by Bonnie Raitt, who generously gave us the rights to use her wonderful song about organ donation. Ms. Raitt also invited us to her concert in Bridgeport in June, where we hosted an awareness table, and she subsequently made a donation to DLC from her “Just Like That” tour.

We held another unique and memorable event called “Jump for Julia” in honor and memory of Julia Bruno, who became a donor hero at age 17 and saved five people’s lives. We invited her heart recipient from Michigan to surprise the family. In a room of 100 of Julia’s friends and family, Jonathan and his 17-year-old daughter Jace walked in with a bouquet of sunflowers, Julia’s favorite flower. The Bruno family heard their daughter’s heartbeat again for the first time in 5 years. For the family, it was a healing part of their grief journey.

Though much more happened throughout the year 2024, I wanted to highlight the personal touches and creativity we used to make the mission of organ and tissue donation in Connecticut successful.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and I, it is our honor to fulfill the mission of Donate Life Connecticut. We strive to continue to provide unique and creative ways to educate and increase awareness regarding organ and tissue donation for Connecticut residents and, ultimately, increase the number of lives saved through the miracle of transplant.

With gratitude,

Lindsay Vigue
Executive Director



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“Ordinary Angels” and Donor Meeting

On Valentine’s Day 2024, Donate Life Connecticut sponsored a screening event of the film, “Ordinary Angels,” inspired by the true story of Sharon Stevens Evans and her efforts to help a young girl, Michelle Schmitt, in Louisville, Kentucky. Hilary Swank plays Sharon, a struggling hairdresser who finds a renewed sense of purpose when she meets a widowed father working hard to care for his two daughters. With his youngest critically ill and waiting for a liver transplant, the fierce woman single-handedly rallies an entire community to help.

What made the evening even more special was that we were able to surprise one of our board members and her family with meeting the man who gave a portion of his liver to her little boy and saved his life. Lawrence Lewis traveled from his home in Vermont to meet his liver recipient, 5-year-old Raul, and the entire Torres family. Lawrence is a two-time living donor, having also donated a kidney.



Volunteer Summit

Each year, Donate Life Connecticut partners with New England Donor Services (NEDS) to host a Volunteer Summit at the Connecticut Hospital Association in Wallingford. This special morning honors our volunteers and provides them with an opportunity for networking, learning, and celebrating. Donate Life Connecticut relies on the generosity and commitment of countless volunteers to help us spread awareness about organ donation and transplantation. We could not do this important work without them. We are grateful for each and every one of you!



GENTLE STRENGTH:

Images of Generosity, Hope, and New Life through Transplant



Due to the effects of Covid-19, I needed a double lung and liver transplant in 2022. I was in the hospital for just short of a year. Thanks to medical advancements, and of course, my selfless donor, I can create new memories with my wife and watch my three young children grow up.
~Mike, Double Lung and Liver Recipient, pictured with his wife, Megan, and their children



Julia knew she wanted to be an organ donor when she got her driver's license. Eight days before her 18th birthday, she was in a car accident, and although the doctors did everything they could to save her, she could not recover. Because of her small act of kindness of checking the box at the DMV, she saved five lives and gave the gift of sight back to a man in Korea. Julia lives on in others, and her legacy remains with us.
~The Bruno Family, Donor Family, pictured left to right, Jacob, Kathy, and Todd, holding a photo of Julia



"From the moment I was told I needed a kidney, to the moment I received the kidney, it was my Faith and trust in God that got me through. I like to make my MESS my message, and my TEST my testimony."
~Deb Wright, Kidney Recipient



Receiving a liver from my best friend has changed my life for the better. I have never felt so physically and mentally strong as I do now. Though it has been five years since the transplant, I am still living in a sense of awe each and every day.
~Nicole (left), Liver Recipient, pictured with her donor and best friend Christina (right)

Featuring 30 individuals and families whose lives have been forever changed by organ donation, the photo series, "Gentle Strength: Images of Generosity, Hope & New Life," will live on for years to come. Many of these images are now featured in a permanent installation at the Transplant Center at Hartford Hospital. We are grateful to each of these willing participants who have helped spread awareness about organ donation, and to Lindsay Vigue, our Executive Director, and talent behind the camera. Each of the photos shown here features a member of the Donate Life CT Board of Directors. View the entire series at www.donatelifect.org/gentle-strength.



I'm simply in awe of the human body. My body quickly adapted to life with one kidney and regenerated 70% of my liver in weeks. I feel great and would do it all over again without question. One of the greatest joys of my life was meeting my liver recipient, Angella, post-donation. She spreads love and cares for others like it's her mission, and I'm thankful to have had a hand in enabling this amazing woman to continue making such a significant impact on this earth!
~Judi, Living Kidney, and Living Liver Donor



Raul was born in 2018 with a rare disease and needed a liver transplant when he was three. After a year on the transplant list, the prayers of the Torres family were answered by a living donor. Lawrence, a Vermont native who had already donated a kidney to a stranger one year prior, decided to give anonymously again. Raul is now thriving, and Marie took a seat on the Board of Directors of DLC to give back to the transplant community that saved her little boy.
~Raul, Kidney Recipient, pictured with his mom, Marie, dad, Omar, and sisters Luna and Mia

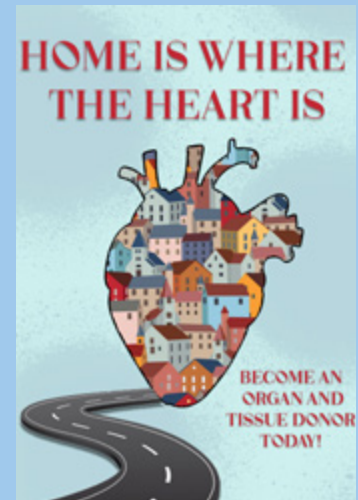


"We are grateful, thankful, and blessed beyond measure. We pray that the spirit of appreciation for the opportunity Kevin has to live his best life eases the loss the donor family experiences. We've been able to spend quality time with our children and grandchildren and are so blessed."
~Kevin Prue, Liver Recipient, with wife, Amy



I believe in practicing what I preach. I've been inspired by every living donor I've had the honor of working with, and one of my proudest accomplishments has been becoming one myself.
~Kari, Living Kidney Donor, Living Donor Transplant Coordinator at Hartford Hospital

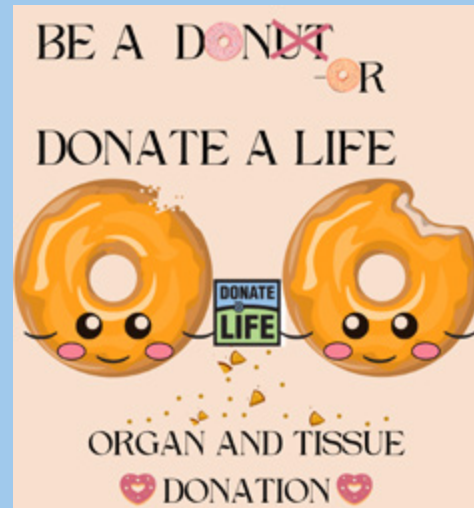
1ST PLACE WINNER
AMELIA T.



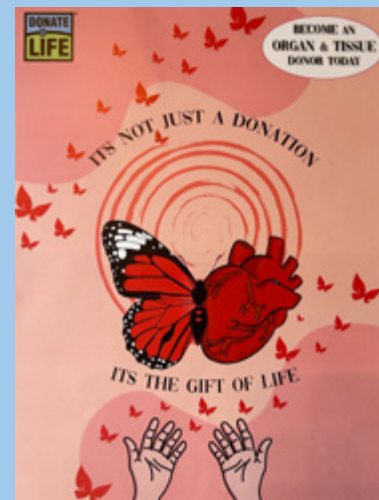
1ST RUNNER UP
DIEGO G.



2ND RUNNER UP
JENNY Z.



TONY AWARD
AYANNA B.



YOUTH ADVOCATE AWARD
SUMMER A.



34th Annual Erica Grossman Visual Arts Contest


Since 1990, tens of thousands of high school students have participated in Donate Life Connecticut's Annual Visual Arts Contest, helping to further organ donation awareness and promote the DLC mission to more Connecticut communities.

The contest is held each year to encourage high school students to learn the importance of Organ and Tissue Donation, giving the student a personal perspective on the importance of the message of Donate Life CT. The 34th Annual Erica Grossman Visual Arts Contest winners were honored at the Hartford State Capitol building in May.



Flag Raising

Donate Life flags serve as a display of unity, remembrance, hope, and support while raising awareness and honoring those touched by donation and transplantation. During National Donate Life Month (NDLM) each April, Donate Life flags are flown across America as a nationwide celebration honoring donors, recipients, and waiting patients. To date, more than 50,000 Donate Life flags have been raised!



Donate Life Month Flag Raising Events

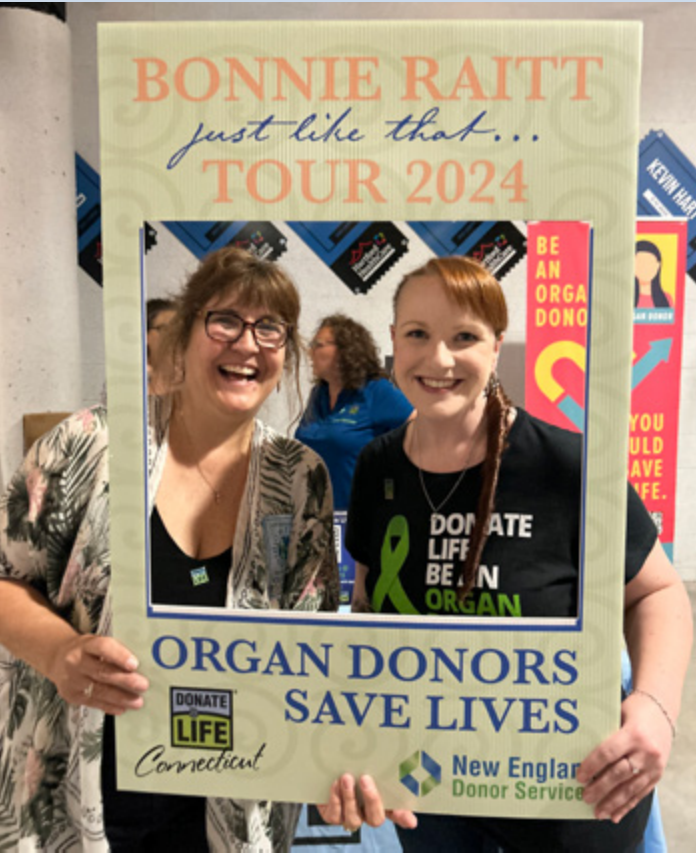
April 5	Old Lyme Memorial Town Hall, 10:30am
April 8	Colchester Town Hall, 10am Bridgeport Town Hall, 11am
April 12	Yale New Haven Hospital, 10am
April 15	East Hartford Raymond Library, 12pm
April 19	Hartford Hospital Donate Life Memorial, 2pm

www.donatelifect.org



Bonnie Raitt - Just Like That Tour

Bonnie Raitt won the 2023 Grammy Award for Song of the Year for “Just Like That”. The song was inspired by a news story about a woman who donated her son’s organs, and Raitt was moved by the story. “Just Like That” is a song about the healing power of organ donation and the connection between donor families and recipients.



Raitt named her 2024 tour after the song and Donate Life Connecticut joined Bonnie Raitt in June at the Hartford Healthcare Amphitheater in Bridgeport for one of her tour concerts.

Ms. Raitt generously allowed Donate Life CT to have an awareness table at the event and also gave us the rights to use “Just Like That” as the

soundtrack for our Gentle Strength Photo Series. She subsequently made a generous monetary donation to Donate Life CT from the proceeds of her tour. To view the video with the soundtrack, visit www.donatelifect.org/gentle-strength.



Transplant Games & Transplant Team of CT

The Transplant Games have a rich and memorable history of bringing together a community of individuals touched by the miracle of donation and transplantation for more than 30 years.

The Transplant Team of CT is managed by DLC Board Member Joanne Pinto. This group of transplant recipients, donor families, living donors, caregivers, family, friends, and professionals are all connected to organ, eye and tissue donation. Transplant Team of CT has two main programs, the Awareness Program and the Showcase Program.

Through the Awareness Program, they participate in various events throughout the year, inspiring and empowering those to spread the word about giving the gift of life. One of the greatest gifts a donor family can receive is to see recipients living a full and healthy life. Recipients honor their donors, donor families, or living donors by promoting the success of transplantation through health and fitness.

The Showcase Program allows members to represent Connecticut at the Transplant Games of America held every two years somewhere in the US. They gather with over 5,000 other people from every state in the country to showcase how well donation and transplantation works. It's about being part of a wonderful, close-knit group of people who truly understand the meaning of Donate Life; who are there to support each other in times of sadness and times of celebration.

In July of 2024, Transplant Team of CT traveled to Birmingham, AL, to participate in the Transplant Games. In 2026, the games will be held in Denver, CO. For more information or to join the team, visit www.transplantteamct.org.



Jump for Julia

In September, we hosted “Jump for Julia,” in honor and memory of Julia Bruno who became an organ donor at the time of her death at age 17. Julia saved the lives of five people with her selfless gift and her family wanted to honor her on the fifth anniversary of her passing with this special event. The event was originally planned as a skydiving event, something Julia and her Dad had always wanted to do together.



However, the weather refused to cooperate and the skydiving had to be canceled. Instead we gathered at Dudleytown Brewing Co. in Windsor, CT to celebrate Julia.

Donate Life CT invited Julia’s heart recipient who flew all the way from

Michigan to surprise the family. In a room full of Julia’s friends and family, Jonathan and his 17-year-old daughter Jace, walked in with a bouquet of sunflowers. Julia’s favorite flower. The Bruno family was able to use a stethoscope to hear their daughter’s heartbeat again. It was an emotional afternoon, but one that went a long way in healing for the Bruno family.



3rd Annual Autumn Garden Party

On October 17, 2024, Donate Life Connecticut hosted the 3rd annual Autumn Garden Party at the Wadsworth Mansion in Middletown. This special gathering honored and celebrated organ donors, recipients, donor families, and transplant professionals.

Attendees enjoyed small plates by local chefs, an open bar, specialty cocktails, music, a silent auction, caricature drawings, a candy bar, and luminaries.

Dr. Cary Caldwell and his wife Karen established the Susan Katz and James Salatto Memorial Fund and matched all contributions to the fund throughout the event.



Hartford Marathon

Donate Life CT was proud to be an Official Charity Partner of the Eversource Hartford Marathon and Half Marathon in October and we were there running strong!

The event has something for the whole family. Participants ran or walked the Charity 5K, many of our volunteers came out to work, runners tackled the half marathon and full marathon, and the kiddos joined the action in the HMF FitKids races.



Blood Drive

On the day before Thanksgiving, Donate Life Connecticut teamed up with the American Red Cross to hold a blood drive - Share a Slice of Life. Organized by Board Member and American Red Cross employee, Megan Serke, the drive emphasized the importance between organ donation and blood donation.

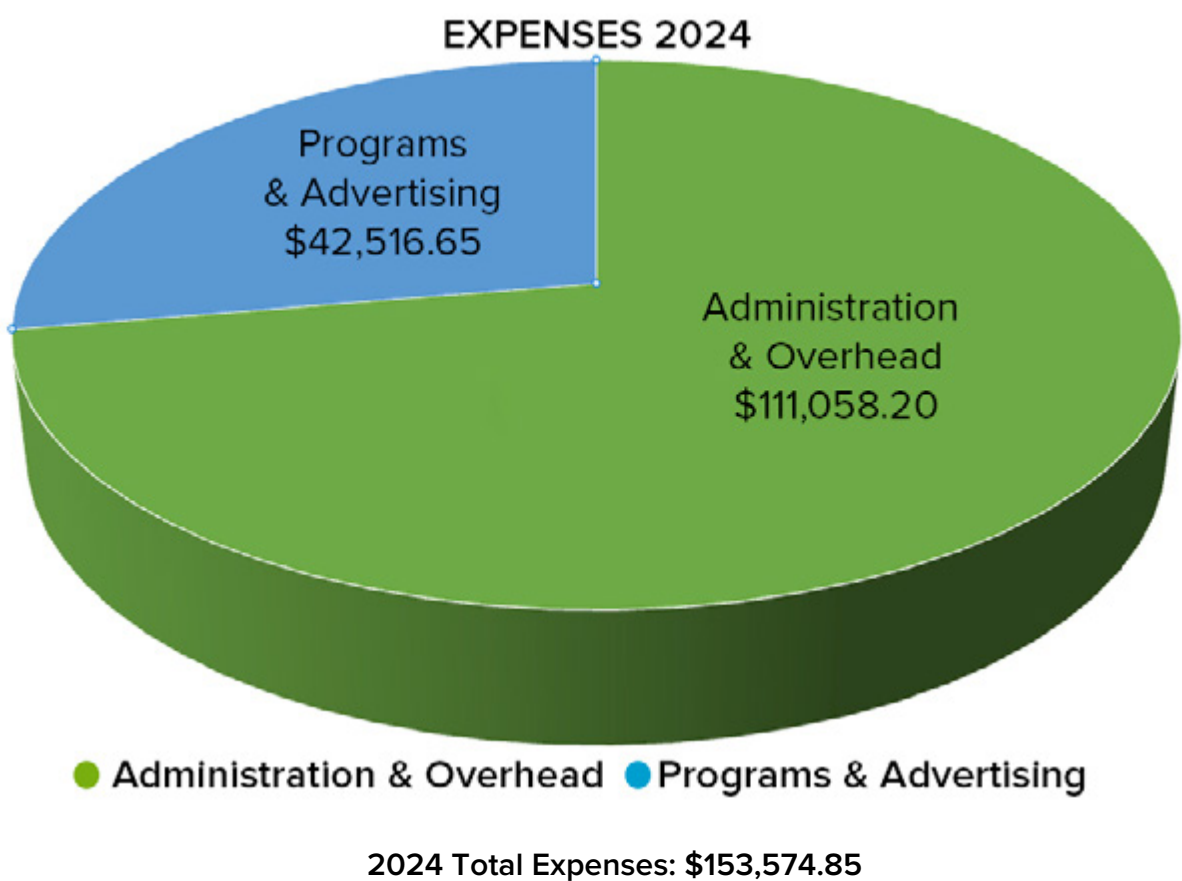
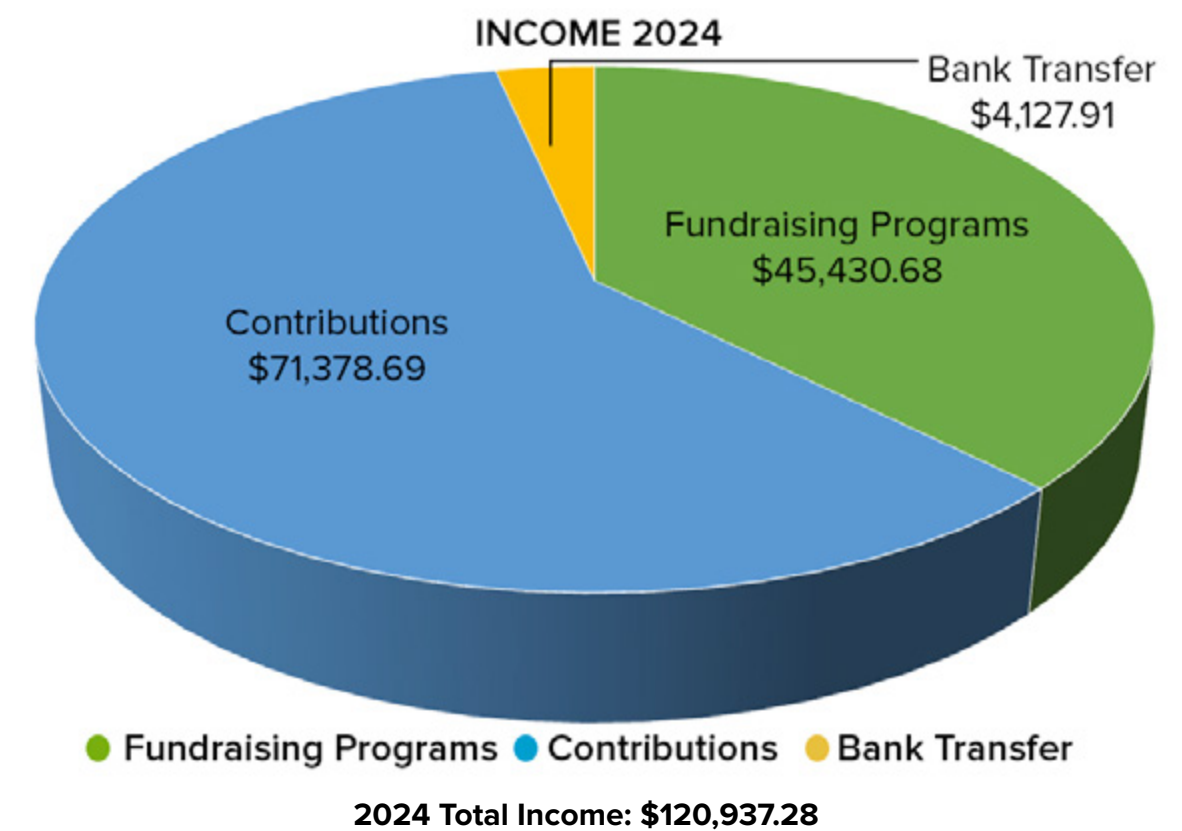
For an organ transplant recipient to receive the gift of life from a generous donor, the transplant center needs the correct blood type to support the



procedure. Thanks to the generosity of blood donors, it is rare that someone receives the call that their lifesaving transplant procedure cannot be done because the hospital does not have the correct blood type. In 2023, more than 46,000 organ transplants were performed in the U.S., according to the United Network for Organ Sharing. Every day in the U.S., patients in hospitals, surgical centers, and emergency treatment facilities need approximately 36,000 units of red blood cells. Organ donation would not be possible without the selfless act of blood donors who choose to give life.



Financial Report 2024 (unaudited)



Gifts of Philanthropy

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Amici, Anthony | Flaherty, Robert | Moore, Alice |
| Aria Foundation | Flynn, Patrick | National Financial Services, LLC |
| Baird, Sarah | Friedman, Harriet | O'Connor, Robert & Annamarie |
| Beckwith, David | Gathercole, Kenneth, Deborah
& Summer Gaylord Specialty
Healthcare | Pastula, Edward |
| Bluh, Donna | Glasser, Anita & Stanley | Pelkey, Peter and Joan |
| Borowsky, Benjamin & Radine | Grant, Barbara | Prucnal, Mindy |
| Brett Capshaw & Mark Stachen | Haines, Elizabeth and Laura | Puttin, Kelly |
| Bruno, Anthony and Susan | Halkias, Lucy | Rodriguez, Maria |
| Bruno, Katherine and Todd | Halkias, Lucy & Nick | Ryan, Beverly |
| Caldwell, Cary | Johnson, Brian | Senk, Paul & Jane |
| Cartee, Guy | Johnson, Daryl | Shaw, Kevin & Linda |
| Conforto, Maria | Joy, Thomas & Annmarie | Skoch, Marilyn |
| Corcoran, Susan | Kassap, Beth | Sparkowski, Edward |
| Decoteau, Peter & Dana | Kiley, Joan | St Germain, Mark & Susan |
| DeFrank, Richard | Landgrebe, Virginia | Stronk, Jenny |
| DeSantis, Sandra | Mackinnon, Amy | Telech, William & Margaret |
| Dodge, Dallas | Malis, Daniel | Todd, Linda |
| Drozdz, James | Matulis, Irene | Vermilyea, Kathleen & Peter |
| Edwards, Cheryl | McCarthy, Ed | Wheelock, Linda |
| Edwards, Judith | | Wrighter, Caleigh |
| Flaherty, Eileen | | Yavarone, Albert |

1 Organ, Eye and Tissue Donor

Saves up to 8 lives	Restores sight to 2 people	Heals the lives of more than 75 people
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DONATE LIFE Connecticut

Register your decision to be an organ donor at donatelifeconnect.org

Thank you.

Each monetary gift and each hour from our volunteers makes a difference in the support of our mission to register donors, educate about living donation, and save lives. On behalf of the Donate Life Connecticut staff and Board of Directors, we thank you for your generosity and support.



Connecticut