



NEWS RELEASE

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NJ SHARING NETWORK REPORTS THAT 678 LIFE-SAVING TRANSPLANTS TOOK PLACE IN 2018

NEW PROVIDENCE, NJ – NJ Sharing Network, the non-profit, federally designated organ procurement organization responsible for the recovery of organs and tissue in the state, has released statistics regarding donation in New Jersey during 2018. Last year, a total of 678 life-saving transplants were made possible, 537 from deceased donors and an additional 141 from living donors.

More hearts (79) were transplanted than ever before, representing an 18 percent increase over 2017. Additionally, an unprecedented number of eye donors (826) gave the gift of sight, a nine percent increase from the prior year.

These record-breaking numbers are against the backdrop of significant growth in organ transplantation in New Jersey, which has increased 35 percent over the last six years. In fact, 2018 marks the fourth year of over 500 organs transplanted in the state. Over that same timeframe, heart donation saw an enormous increase of 132 percent.

Transplants saw an upswing nationally, as well, with over 36,500 organ transplants performed in 2018. This sets an annual record for the sixth straight year, according to preliminary data from United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS).

Vernell Williams of Paterson, NJ, says that he is eternally grateful to a man named Victor Startek of Toms River, NJ, who passed away at age 27 and donated his heart and kidney. Startek had registered as an organ donor when he first got his New Jersey driver's license. His mother, Deborah Martinez, and twin sister, Ashley Startek, said that knowing Victor had already made the decision was an enormous relief for them. Williams, 50, who suffered from congestive heart failure, had waited months to receive a heart transplant and had nearly given up hope.

"The months that I spent in the hospital waiting for a new heart were the most challenging of my life. I'm an optimistic person, but I'd begun to think I was facing the end. That's when I got the call – and Victor literally saved my life."

Like Victor, nearly 40 percent of those who gave the gift of life in 2018 previously registered as an organ donor and made their wishes known to family and friends, and this number continues to grow.

"The increased percentage of donors who were previously registered speaks to the incredible job that our entire staff does to educate and inform the community about the life-saving benefits of organ and tissue donation," said Joe Roth, President and CEO of NJ Sharing Network.

Today, there are nearly 4,000 New Jersey residents awaiting a life-saving transplant. Every day, approximately three people are added to the New Jersey waiting list, and one person dies every three days while waiting for a transplant. One organ donor can save eight lives and one tissue donor can restore health to over 75 people. New Jersey residents can help save lives by registering as organ and tissue donors, having a conversation with family and friends and getting involved at www.NJSharingNetwork.org.