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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **NJ SHARING NETWORK'S 2019 5K CELEBRATION OF LIFE EXCEEDS PARTICIPATION RECORDS – TOP FUNDRAISING TEAMS ANNOUNCED**

**NEW PROVIDENCE, NJ** – NJ Sharing Network's 2019 5K Celebration of Life, held in Long Branch on May 19 and New Providence on June 2, saw the highest number of participants than ever before. The number of teams in attendance also expanded significantly, with a total of 377, including 115 new teams participating for the first time. The event raised over \$1.1 million this year, with more than 40 sponsors contributing \$450,000 collectively. Since its inception in 2011, the 5K Celebration of Life has raised more than \$8 million. Funds raised through this signature event support the NJ Sharing Network Foundation's mission to increase the number of lives saved through innovative transplant research, family support, public awareness and education about the life-saving benefits of organ and tissue donation and transplantation.

Year after year, the 5K Celebration of Life brings together thousands of walkers, runners and volunteers to honor those who gave the gift of organs or tissue, pay tribute to those who have received a transplant, offer hope to those currently waiting for a transplant and remember those who passed away while waiting for the gift of life.

The 2019 5K campaign came to a close on August 31 and top five fundraising teams have been announced by NJ Sharing Network, raising \$136,379 collectively. Listed in order of the amount of funds raised, each team has a special connection to donation and

transplantation. Team Luke, created in honor of organ and tissue donor Luke Bautista, has held the top fundraising spot for the past four years. In second place is Team Buck, walking in honor of organ and tissue donors Dan Buckiewicz and Joyce Novotny. Team Maeve The Brave participated for their second year in memory of organ donor Maeve Behan, came in third. Team Hailey, the largest team of 2019, was created in honor of organ donor Hailey Palumbo. Hailey's liver recipient also joined the team on event day. Finally, team Run for Your Life celebrates kidney transplant recipient Richard Engel, who walked with his friend and living donor, Charlotte Bashforth.

Next year will be an exciting time for NJ Sharing Network, as it marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 5K Celebration of Life. The event will return to Long Branch on Sunday, May 17, 2020 and New Providence on Sunday, June 7, 2020. "This will be a celebratory time for everyone in the organ donation and transplant community, as we mark 10 years of hosting the 5K Celebration of Life," said NJ Sharing Network President and CEO, Joe Roth. "This event continues to be a healing experience for our families, and we appreciate the participants, teams, volunteers, community officials and contributors who sustain these life-affirming events. We recognize, in particular, our presenting sponsors, Hackensack Meridian Health and Pfizer Inc., for their year after year commitment."

In addition, New Jersey will be hosting the Transplant Games of America in July 17-22, 2020 at the Meadowlands. An expected 12,000-15,000 people from all 50 states, Puerto Rico and beyond, will travel to the Garden State to unite and raise awareness of organ, eye and tissue donation and transplantation.

In 2018, 678 life-saving transplants were made possible, 537 from deceased donors and an additional 141 from living donors. 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](http://www.NJSharingNetwork.org).

[About NJ Sharing Network](#)

NJ Sharing Network is the non-profit organization responsible for the recovery and placement of donated organs and tissue for the nearly 4,000 New Jersey residents waiting for a life-saving transplant. Its Foundation is committed to increasing the number of lives saved through innovative transplant research, family support, public awareness and education about the life-saving benefits of organ and tissue donation and transplantation.