



## NEWS RELEASE

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For information: Terese Kelly  
Rosica Public Relations  
terese@rosica.com  
P: 201.843.5600  
C: 973-722-2482

John Valentine  
NJ Sharing Network  
[jvalentine@njsharingnetwork.org](mailto:jvalentine@njsharingnetwork.org)  
862-216-0718

### **NJ SHARING NETWORK GEARS UP FOR ITS NEWEST 5K CELEBRATION OF LIFE LOCATION "DOWN THE SHORE"**

***The three-part event series to raise awareness for organ and tissue donation concludes in Lincroft on August 21***

**NEW PROVIDENCE, NJ** – Wall resident Chris Bautista lost his son, Luke, on May 6, 2016. Luke was only 15 years old. As an organ donor, Luke saved five lives: his heart went to a 14-year-old male from NY, his liver went to a 55-year-old man from NJ, his right and left kidney went to a 30-year-old male from NJ and a 27-year-old male from NJ, respectively, and his pancreas went to a 36-year-old female from PA. Luke was also a tissue donor and was able to give the gift of life to many others. In total, his gifts will help save and improve the lives of over 100 people.

The Bautista family, walking as "Team Luke," will be joined by many others at NJ Sharing Network's Annual 5K Celebration of Life Walk on Sunday, August 21 to honor those who gave the gift of life, 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.

Every year, the 5K Celebration of Life events bring together thousands of walkers, runners and volunteers in support of NJ Sharing Network's life-saving mission. Lincroft is the third and

final location of 2016 for the 5K Celebration of Life, taking place at Brookdale Community College, 765 Newman Springs Rd in Lincroft, NJ. This location enables even more Central and South Jersey residents to participate in the fun-filled celebration including music, snacks, prizes, and exciting activities for all ages.

Others, like Chris Bautista, have many reasons to honor, remember, and give hope by participating in the upcoming 5K Celebration of Life:

- Padma and Varsha Garla, Marlboro residents and participants of “Team Sunflower,” will be attending to celebrate the gift of life that Padma's husband and Varsha's father, Srinivas, received – a kidney transplant.
- Keath Gerald, resident of Plainfield, received a heart and liver transplant concurrently during a 12-hour surgery in August 2015. Since then, as a volunteer for NJ Sharing Network, he has dedicated himself to spreading awareness about organ and tissue donation. Keath is the proud captain of his 5K team “Heartopia” and will be celebrating the one year anniversary of his transplant at the Lincroft 5K.

“We are excited to expand our 5K Celebration of Life locations, giving the entire state of New Jersey the opportunity to support our life-saving mission and get involved in our organization’s events,” said NJ Sharing Network President and CEO, Joe Roth. “It is an amazing gathering of families, friends and volunteers who have been touched by organ and tissue donation and we’re thrilled to have even more people become involved – whether near or far.”

The organization hopes to raise \$1.25 million this year to increase the number of lives saved through research, donor family support, education and public awareness about the life-saving benefits of organ and tissue donation and transplantation.

The 2016 5K Celebration of Life events kicked off on April 24 with a 5K Walk/Run at Bergen Community College followed by a 5K Walk and USATF Certified Race in New Providence at NJ Sharing Network’s headquarters where 10,000 participants showed support for the cause.

“NJ Sharing Network set a life-saving record in 2015 by making 531 organ transplants possible, a 37 percent increase from 2014. It is events like this that help make these record-breaking numbers possible,” added Roth.

Today, there are over 122,000 people waiting for a transplant and 22 die each day while waiting for a transplant, but one donor can save eight lives and one tissue donor can enhance the lives of over 50 people. In New Jersey, there are 5,000 people on the waiting list and one person dies every three days waiting for a transplant.

New Jersey residents can help save lives by registering as organ and tissue donors at [www.NJSharingNetwork.org](http://www.NJSharingNetwork.org), talking about it with their families and friends and joining NJ Sharing Network at its next 5K Celebration of Life event.

#### About NJ Sharing Network

NJ Sharing Network is a non-profit, federally designated organization responsible for the recovery and placement of donated organs and tissue for New Jersey residents in need of life-saving transplants. NJ Sharing Network partners with Donate Life America, a not-for-profit national alliance that drives communities to increase their numbers of registered donors. NJ Sharing Network honors those who gave, pays tribute to those who received, offers hope to those who continue to wait, and remembers the lives lost while waiting for the gift of life.