

THE BEST OF DONOR NETWORK WEST

March 2025
NEWSLETTER

Written by Maxwell | Designed by Brooke

A Spring of Hope

March is National Kidney Month & Women's History Month, a vital time to raise awareness about kidney health, preventative healthcare, the critical need for organ donation, and to celebrate and honor the incredible women in our communities and lives. Throughout this month, we have the privilege of educating our communities about kidney organ donation, living kidney donation, the life-saving impact of transplantation, and the everlasting impact women have made in medicine, social work, science, research, transplantation and beyond.

Check out how we're connecting and educating our communities throughout this March in the latest edition of the Best of Donor Network West.



Visit our
shareables page here



Best of Donor Network West
Newsletter Library



National Kidney Month Shareables



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We said yes because it helps so many people with an organ that would normally just be discarded. Thank you for the opportunity to give back!

Freyja's Parents



DONOR NETWORK WEST
BIRTH TISSUE

"The secret of getting ahead is getting started."
– Mark Twain

DONOR
NETWORK WEST

The Impact of Tissue Transplantation



For the past 15 years, I have been privileged to work in the field of tissue donation, a profession that has shaped my life and deepened my appreciation for the profound generosity of those who choose to give. Every day, I witness the incredible impact tissue donation has on individuals and families, transforming lives in ways that often go unseen yet are no less significant than organ transplantation.

Tissue donation is a silent hero in the world of healthcare. While organ donation often takes center stage, the contributions of tissue donors are equally vital. A single donor can enhance or restore the lives of dozens of recipients, helping burn victims heal, enabling athletes to recover from devastating injuries, restoring mobility through bone and ligament transplants, and even giving sight to the blind through corneal donation. Each of these gifts holds immeasurable value, and every donation deserves the utmost respect and gratitude.

What inspires me most is the unwavering selflessness of donors and their families. In moments of grief, they make a decision that extends beyond themselves, choosing to create a legacy of healing. Their courage and generosity reinforce the idea that every form of donation, whether an organ that saves a life or tissue that restores quality of life, is a gift beyond measure.

I strongly advocate for the recognition that tissue donation is not secondary to organ donation but rather a crucial component of medical care. Millions of individuals in the United States alone receive life-enhancing tissue transplants every year, and the impact we make is truly remarkable. Each contribution carries the power to transform lives, and every act of donation deserves the same level of appreciation and reverence.

At Donor Network West, we have much to be proud of. Over the past four years since I joined the organization, I have witnessed our teams take on incredible challenges, adapt to a constantly evolving environment, and emerge stronger than ever. I couldn't ask for a better team to be a part of.

Finally, I'm excited to announce that we are celebrating the official launch of our very own Birth Tissue Donation Program! This program is particularly special because it allows us to engage with a population we don't typically interact with—mothers giving birth, who choose to help others by donating their placental tissues, which would otherwise be discarded. These gifts go on to help hundreds of people through wound and burn therapies, as well as a wide range of other medical treatments. We have ambitious plans for this program and hope to expand this service to our entire service area in the future.

Thank you to our entire DNWest team, regardless of your role, please know that every single day you are contributing to creating literal miracles for someone in need. This work is not always easy, but it is always worth it to someone out there in need.

Matt Graves

*Vice President of Donor Operations,
Northern Nevada and Tissue Operations*



Another Hero Rises

Kristin Holtsman - Living Kidney Donor

As a team at Donor Network West, we all play an imperative role in providing successful outcomes in the miracle that is the Gift of Life. Longtime Donor Network West team member, Kristin Holtsman took that calling to the ultimate level. In December of 2024, Kristin Holtsman donated her kidney altruistically, providing a second chance and a healthier life for her recipient.

"I feel like I have a greater appreciation for my health and how precious it is. So, to think that somebody else is now getting to live their life to the fullest makes me really happy." said Holtsman.

Kristin's interest and inspiration towards becoming a living donor hero began when she started working at Donor Network West about 15 years ago, and peaked when she saw the everlasting impact of the Gift of Life take place in her own family. Kristin's cousin donated her kidney to her uncle, the ultimate gift from a daughter to a father. "I think the curiosity and the process started way back when I was hired. But the first really personal impact from donation outside of just how caring for donors has impacted my life was my cousin, who donated to my uncle. Our entire family had the privilege of watching him come back to life before our very eyes." said Kristin.

Kristin's heroic and lifesaving decision didn't hold her out for long, as she was back to her active and fit lifestyle only three weeks after her operation! She received some competitive motivation from her friend and colleague, Luis Mayen, VP of External Affairs and Strategic Partnerships and fellow Living Kidney Donor. "He started jogging at two weeks (post-operation), and so I tried that just because I'm inherently competitive. But it still felt like my guts were gonna fall out, so then I started jogging at 3 weeks." said Holtsman.

Kristin recommends that anyone who is interested in becoming a living donor to "Just take the first step. You can make the process go at whatever pace you need it to go. It's such a big decision with so many steps, it's like eating an elephant, you need to take it one piece and one stop at a time, making sure you're okay with everything."

I asked Kristin "If you could pass on one message to your kidney recipient, what would it be?"

"I hope he knows that my life improved from this as much as his did."



Celebrating Black History & Healthy Hearts

Black History Month & American Heart Month

Of the total candidates currently waiting for a kidney transplant, 27.8% were Black/African American. With more than 29,000 African Americans waiting for an organ transplant, Black Americans make up the largest group of multiethnic people needing an organ transplant. This is why it is vital for more people to register to become organ donors. The need for intercultural donations is even more significant as organ transplantations' success rate and future success increase interculturally.



Black History Month
Shareables



American Heart Month
Shareables

National Donor Day

Thank you to the donor heroes, both living and passed, and their donor families, who have inspired millions nationwide.

You make our mission possible. You bring hope. You gave the #GiftOfLife.

Check out some of the incredible donor heroes we had the privilege of honoring on National Donor Day.



Blake and Aleah



Cindy



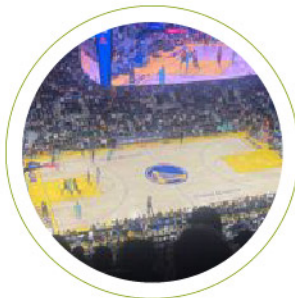
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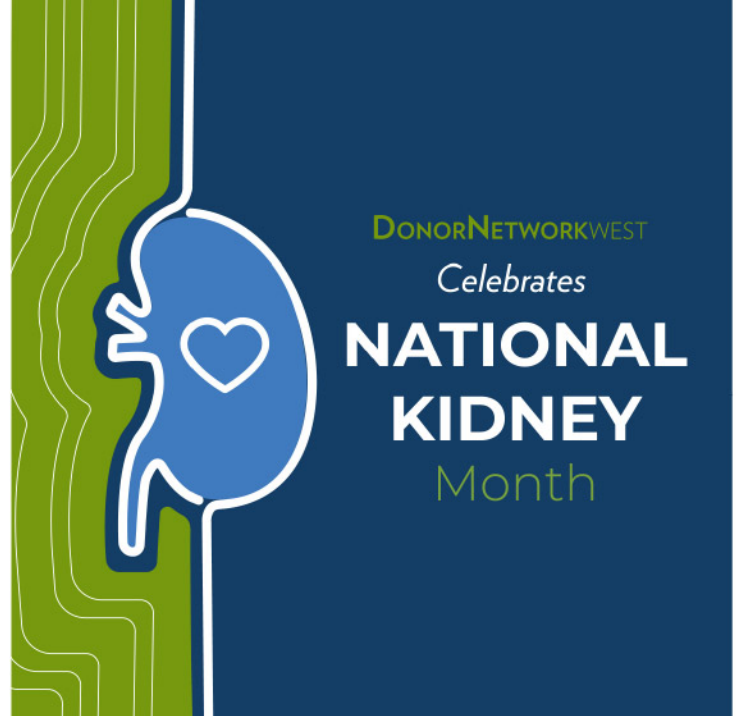
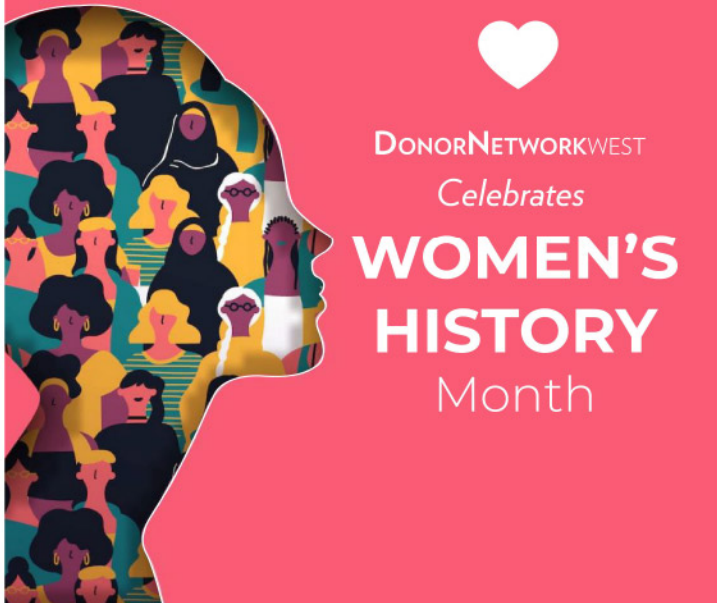


A Conversation with Velma Wilson

Warriors African American Heritage Night

On February 25th, the Golden State Warriors hosted African-American Heritage Night, celebrating the rich culture and heritage of the African-American community in the San Francisco Bay Area. Our Donate Life Ambassador and Tissue Transplant Recipient Velma Wilson has been hosting African-American Heritage Night with Donor Network West for over 14 years to inspire and encourage not only Black and African-Americans but all people to say YES to organ donation.





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Check out all of the incredible individuals we were able to celebrate this month!

National Kidney Month

Adriana Castillo, Leslie Forestant, Jesus Mondragon, Luis Mayen, Kristin Holtzman

Women's History Month

Wendy Hammond, Kristi Ouimet, Dr. Janice Whaley, Kristin Holtzman

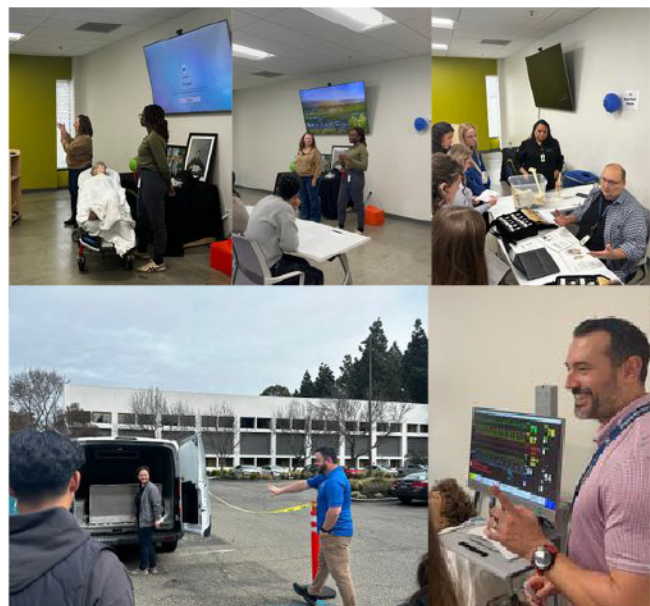
High School Visits

Donor Network West was welcomed Vacaville High School students and faculty to our Clinical facility in Norris Canyon. These heroes of tomorrow had the opportunity to hear stories from donor hero families, transplant recipients, and Donor Network West professionals who specialize in the multiple aspects of the #GiftOfLife.

These students were ready and avid listeners, excited to be hands-on and learn more about their professional futures within this life-saving healthcare and science sector. It is always a privilege to educate and nurture our communities.



Check out the awesome day the students had here:





April is NATIONAL DONATE LIFE MONTH

Let Life Sing

In 2025, Let Life Sing! Birds are known across many cultures as one of the most welcomed and visible signs of spring. They represent both new beginnings and visits from loved ones who have passed away. The yearly return of birds and their songs offer us a sense of peace and hope.

National Donate Life Month is a time to educate about organ, eye and tissue donation, and to honor and remember donors and the lives they have saved and healed. Your decision to be an organ, eye and tissue donor gives hope to the 100,000 people on the national organ transplant waiting list who are waiting for a second chance at life.

During National Donate Life Month and throughout the year, join us in helping save and heal lives: register your decision to be an organ, eye and tissue donor, learn more about living donation, and support the Donate Life cause.



Please visit our observance page to get our Shareables

THE GUIDING LIGHT OF APRIL

There are nearly 600 Nevadans awaiting an organ transplant. To bring attention to this statistic and the need for organ donation, Donor Network West will be continuing the tradition of lighting up the Reno Arch in blue and green starting April 1st as a symbol of organ and tissue donation. The Arch will be blue and green the entire month of April. Save the date and join us!

Join Us! Reno Arch Lighting Celebrating National Donate Life Month

Tuesday
April 1, 2025

Virginia Street between 2nd-4th Street

7:00p.m.

Proclamation and Activities!

7:40p.m.

Turn the Reno Arch Blue and Green!



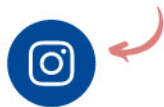
Saving a Life...Twice

Bride Jenny Tice shares a special connection with Dr. Carlos Esquivel, a pioneering pediatric transplant surgeon at Stanford Medicine Children's Health. He saved her life—not once, but twice. When she was ready to walk down the aisle at her wedding, she knew exactly who she wanted by her side.



This day would not be possible without him.

- Jenny Tice



Saving More Lives Than Ever Before

In a historic achievement that underscores the growing impact of organ donation, Donor Network West has reached 100 organ donors in the first two and a half months of the year—marking the fastest timeframe in the organization's 38-year history to hit this milestone.



This unprecedented success reflects the generosity of donor families and the unwavering support of hospitals and healthcare professionals who work tirelessly to facilitate the donation process. Donor Network West is on track to save more lives than ever, reinforcing its mission to provide hope and healing through organ, eye, and tissue donation.



Read more about this remarkable achievement here:



Our Woman of the Year!

On International Women's Day, our President and CEO, Janice F. Whaley, PhD, MPH, had the privilege of joining the Women Health Care Executives NorCal RefresHER event, surrounded by incredible leaders who inspire and empower their colleagues and peers, including Donor Network West's board member Berta Alicia Bejarano, M.A., MBA, C.I., CDE®, who was a lead panelist for this inspiring event.

The Women Health Care Executives NorCal nominated Janice for Women of the Year, an honor she does not take lightly. We're proud to be one of the sponsors of their 2025 Woman of the Year Gala this April 25th at The Westin St. Francis in San Francisco; it will undoubtedly be a memorable night!



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and don't miss a beat!



There are plenty of events and celebrations that we're privileged to be a part of! The best way to stay updated on everything we have going on is to follow us on social media @MyDNWest across all platforms! Our Instagram is a fantastic place to start, or maybe you enjoy Facebook. Either way, we're everywhere, and we'll see you there!

