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## NEWS RELEASE

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### MORE THAN A 5K– **NJ SHARING NETWORK'S** CELEBRATION OF LIFE SIGNIFIES A SPECIAL TIME OF HEALING

NEW PROVIDENCE, NJ – Every year, thousands of walkers, runners and volunteers are brought together by NJ Sharing Network's 5K Celebration of Life to honor those who gave the gift of organ 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. For many, this annual event means far more than a walk/run.

For the Startek family, it meant listening to their son's heartbeat again. On June 3 at the organization's headquarters in New Providence, the family of 27-year-old donor Victor Startek of Toms River, NJ met the recipient of Victor's heart and left kidney, Vernell Williams, for the first time. The two families had been in contact for a couple of months and finally had the chance to meet one another before they walked in the 5K Celebration of Life together, where both families had teams participating.

For Mark Meade of Princeton Junction, it meant the celebration of the tenth anniversary of his heart transplant. Meade had a series of heart issues beginning when he was 43 years old and in 2005, while on a business trip in California he suffered a major heart attack. In June 2008, Meade received the gift of life - a new heart - and his life was forever changed. Meade, along with his wife of over 50 years, Terry, are actively involved in the community to spread the life-saving message of organ and tissue donation.

"Our Celebration of Life events are more than a 5K. It's a chance for those in our community affected by organ and tissue donation to come together," said NJ Sharing Network President and CEO, Joe Roth. "We're grateful to our dedicated sponsors, including

our presenting sponsors Hackensack Meridian Health and Pfizer Inc, teams, participants, families and friends whose support guides NJ Sharing Network in our life-saving mission.”

NJ Sharing Network raised nearly \$1.2 million through its 5K Celebration of Life to **support its Foundation’s mission** to increase the number of lives saved through research, donor family support, education and public awareness about life-saving benefits of organ and tissue donation and transplantation. **NJ Sharing Network is already gearing up for next year’s** events in Long Branch on May 19, 2019 and New Providence on June 2, 2019.

**“The team at NJ Sharing Network is truly part of our hospital and network family, standing by our side and helping families at the most difficult time of their life. They have a tremendous impact throughout the state and we are so grateful for all their efforts,” says Kenneth N. Sable, M.D., MBA, FACEP, president of Hackensack Meridian Health Jersey Shore University Medical Center. “For everyone who participated in the 5K, it was a tribute to all those who have given the gift of life, and an inspiration to others who can help grow awareness for organ and tissue donation.”**

**“There is a shared mission between Pfizer and NJ Sharing Network to help the human condition,” says Doug Giordano, Senior Vice President, Worldwide Business Development, Pfizer Inc. “The focus for both organizations is on people and that’s critical. Pfizer is really proud to be a sponsor of the 5K Celebration of Life.”**

In 2017, more New Jersey residents gave the gift of life than ever before, resulting in over 550 lives saved. Every day, approximately three New Jersey residents are added to the transplant waiting list and last year nearly 100 people died while waiting for a transplant. One organ donor can save eight lives and one tissue donor can restore health to over 75 people.

#### About NJ Sharing Network

NJ Sharing Network – **selected by NJBIZ as one of the state’s “Best Places to Work” in 2018** - saves lives through organ and tissue donation. Located in New Providence, NJ, the organization recovers organs and tissue and belongs to a national network that helps the 115,000 people 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), having a conversation with family and friends and joining NJ Sharing Network at its upcoming events.