



NEWS RELEASE

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YOUNG ADVOCATES TOUCHED BY ORGAN DONATION RECEIVE \$5,000 SCHOLARSHIPS FROM NJ SHARING NETWORK

NEW PROVIDENCE, NJ – Two recent New Jersey high school graduates with a passion for raising awareness of organ and tissue donation were each awarded a \$5,000 scholarship for the 2018-19 academic year. Paige LeBlanc, 18, a North Burlington High School graduate from Columbus, New Jersey, was awarded Missy's Miracle Scholarship, which was created in celebration of the 30th anniversary of Missy Rodriguez's liver transplant. Missy was 10 years old when she had her liver transplant and wants people to understand that children are also affected by organ and tissue donation.

Zachary Roth, 19, a Hillsborough High School graduate received the Betsy Niles Scholarship. It is offered in memory of Betsy Niles, a children's book editor and lifelong resident of Montclair, NJ. Betsy died in 2011 and, in keeping with her tradition of giving, her organs were donated. Betsy was known for always giving the perfect gift for every occasion. Betsy's last gift was the greatest gift of all, the gift of life.

"Saving lives takes on new meaning when young people embrace it, and Zachary and Paige are two amazing examples," said Joe Roth, President and CEO, NJ Sharing Network.

“When Zach starts at Virginia Tech in the fall and Paige attends the University of Tennessee, **we know they’ll** continue to share the message of organ and tissue donation.”

For as long as she can remember, Paige LeBlanc’s family has been involved in organ donation. Her cousin Sara was an organ donor at a young age, and her cousin Zach received three liver transplants by the age of 22. Living through these experiences left a lasting impression on LeBlanc – and a determination to raise awareness of organ and tissue donation.

Near and dear to her heart, organ and tissue donation became the focus of her Senior Gold Award project, the highest honor in Girl Scouting. She created a podcast series by interviewing families touched by donation. She recorded a total of 28 podcasts and eventually created a Facebook page, a website and YouTube channel.

“I know firsthand that most awareness comes from knowing someone who is either a transplant recipient or a donor,” said LeBlanc. **“I’m proud to bring real stories to life for those who otherwise wouldn’t have a connection to organ donation.”**

When Zachary Roth lost his brother, his life changed forever. Inspired by a letter from one of his brother’s organ recipients, Roth found purpose in starting a Donate Life Club at his high school. He completed training to become a certified NJ Sharing Network volunteer and learned how to speak to others about organ and tissue donation. In his role as President of the Donate Life Club, Roth managed all volunteer and fundraising activities for the organization. Through that and other activities, he has raised thousands of dollars for organ and tissue donation awareness.

“I’ll never forget the day my brother died,” said Roth, **“and I’ll never forget the day I found a reason to live for him. Starting the Donate Life Club – and seeing how far it has already grown – tells me that I am doing something concrete to honor my brother’s life and to help others.”**

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, having a conversation with family and friends and joining NJ Sharing Network at its upcoming events.