



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR PLAINFIELD RESIDENT, TRANSPLANT GAMES ARE A REMINDER OF A SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE

NEW PROVIDENCE, NJ – Heart and liver transplant recipient Keath Gerald joined more than 50 other New Jersey residents at this year’s Transplant Games of America, a multi-sport festival event that highlights the critical importance of organ and tissue donation. Transplant recipients, living donors and donor families come together to honor those who gave the gift of life and to celebrate those who received a second chance at life – as Gerald did.

When he was only 22 years old, Gerald’s health started failing. In 2012, doctors discovered he had an irregular heartbeat and needed a heart transplant in order to survive. While waiting for a heart, the medicine that was keeping him alive was destroying his liver. In August 2015, a miracle happened for Gerald – he received his heart and liver transplant at the same time during a twelve-hour surgery. Since then, as a volunteer for NJ Sharing Network, he has dedicated himself to spreading awareness about organ and tissue donation, which includes participating in the Transplant Games of America.

This year, the Transplant Games took place in Cleveland, OH from June 10-15, where Gerald medaled in several events. His individual medals included bronze in softball throw, silver in swimming 50-meter backstroke, 50-meter butterfly, 100-meter freestyle and bronze in

swimming 50-meter breaststroke. Team medals included a silver in swimming 200-meter free relay and basketball. Gerald is a member of Team Liberty, a group of transplant recipients, living donors and donor families from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut who compete at the Transplant Games of America to raise awareness of the need for registered organ and tissue donors. The team won 75 medals this year at the Games. Team Liberty is a program of the NJ Sharing Network Foundation and supports the organization's life-saving mission throughout the year.

Additional participants included:

- Ezequiel and Iris Garcia of Newark, who are the parents of organ and tissue donor, Reinaldo Garcia. Ezequiel and Iris were sent to the Transplant Games by NJ Sharing Network's Employee Giving Campaign, a program where employees make contributions for grants that support the mission of the NJ Sharing Network Foundation. Ezequiel and Iris volunteered during the Games to give out medals for certain sports. They also spoke during the Games to provide the perspective of a donor family.
- Patti DiSanto, Hillsborough resident, mother of heart recipient Joseph DiSanto, and co-manager of Team Liberty. At these Games, she accepted the Team Manager of the Year Award for all of her hard work overseeing Team Liberty with the other co-managers, Michael DiPiano, Michael Strusiak and Michele Dabal.

Today, there are over 122,000 people waiting for a transplant and 22 die each day while waiting for organs, 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.

New Jersey residents can help save lives by registering as organ and tissue donors at www.NJSharingNetwork.org, talking about it with their families and friends and joining NJ Sharing Network at its next 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.