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Gift of Life honors state representative, Michigan hospitals and community members for outstanding support of organ and tissue donation

Ann Arbor, November 24, 2008 – Gift of Life presented its prestigious Community Service and Professional Service awards at the 37th annual Gift of Life Foundation meeting in Brighton, Mich., on Thursday, November 20, 2008. These deserving award recipients all share a passionate desire to save and enhance lives through organ and tissue donation.

Community Service Award Recipients

- **State Representative Paul Condino, for his leadership in passing the Revised Uniform Anatomical Gift Law**
Behind any good piece of legislation is a committed lawmaker who makes sure that the bill not only sees the light of day but makes it into law. In this case, the legislation was the Revised Uniform Anatomical Gift Law, and the lawmaker was Representative Paul Condino. The Revised UAGL is a major piece of legislation that became law in Michigan on May 1 this year. The UAGL brings Michigan's donation practice into line with federal regulations and with those in most other states. It solidifies the Michigan Organ Donor Registry. Most importantly, it affirms the right of every single citizen in the state to have the option of becoming an organ and tissue donor upon their death and thereby saving and improving lives. This fundamental principal is now the abiding principal for the entire state of Michigan. Representative Condino is responsible for that. Not only did he help usher the Revised UAGL through the halls of the Capitol, he helped it receive unanimous support in both the House and the Senate.
- **Dave Freestone, manager at the Secretary of State branch office in Alma, for his service in promoting the Michigan Organ Donor Registry**
As Dave Freestone's kidneys failed a couple of years ago, he joined the transplant waiting list for a relatively brief time. Then he was fortunate to find people who were willing to donate a kidney to him. Ultimately, a woman from Mr. Freestone's church donated her kidney to him. As he puts it, "The amazing thing is that I am alive because of her and she feels that SHE received the blessing!" He has put this gift to good use. Mr. Freestone now shares his story with others at churches, health fairs and



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civic groups. He also delivers that message every day at his Secretary of State branch office in Alma. Mr. Freestone agreed this year to participate in a federal grant program called Tell Us Now that encourages people to tell the branch clerk that they want to join the Donor Registry. During a 4-month period in 2007, about 71 people signed up through the Alma branch office. But during the same period this year, when Mr. Freestone and his staff of three promoted the Donor Registry, 867 people signed up. That's about a 1,200 percent increase.

- **Marge Del Greco, Gift of Life volunteer, for her tremendous efforts in getting people to sign up on the Michigan Organ Donor Registry**

Marge Del Greco received a liver transplant at Henry Ford Hospital in October 2004, after being on the waiting list for about a year and a half. Less than 6 months post-transplant, Marge became a volunteer with Gift of Life Michigan. Because of her great work, she became the Volunteer Area Leader for Oakland County. Marge has coordinated over 100 events to promote the Donor Registry in the past two years. She was instrumental in the pursuit of using laptops to sign up donor registrants at community events and in May 2008 received a Gift of Life Foundation grant for just that purpose. The use of laptops has proven to be highly successful. Marge has volunteered over 650 hours this year and has signed up over 500 people on the Donor Registry. In addition, Marge is a member of the Workplace Partnership for Life Advisory Council, promoting organ donation with businesses across the state. And she was part of the Team Michigan Planning Committee, helping to coordinate plans for the U.S. Transplant Games, held this summer in Pittsburgh. (Not only that, Marge brought home the gold from Pittsburgh in the “doubles bowling event”!) Through her many efforts, Marge has signed up hundreds of people on the Michigan Organ Donor Registry, touching the lives of many, and continues to find new ways to share her passion with others.

Professional Service Award Recipients

- **Northern Michigan Regional Hospital, Petoskey Pulmonary Medicine Group**

As the federal government continues to call for increased use of Donation after Cardiac Death – another means to honor the wishes of people who want to help others through organ donation – Gift of Life Michigan sought out physicians statewide who were willing and capable of helping facilitate these life-saving donations. The Petoskey Pulmonary Medicine Group stepped up and answered the call for champions to help move organ donation into the next generation in Northern Michigan. These physicians' availability is written into the policy at Northern Michigan Regional Hospital; they are ready, willing and able to work collaboratively with families and transplant centers. These doctors' willingness to save the lives of Michigan residents has resulted in almost twice as many transplanted organs coming



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from Northern Michigan Regional Hospital this year as compared with last year. This Professional Service Award goes to Dr. David Knitter, Dr. Jeff Washington, and Dr. Dwayne Griffin of the Petoskey Pulmonary Medicine Group.

- **Ingham Regional Medical Center, Critical Care Team**

Through many changes in administration and other staffing at Ingham Regional Medical Center in recent years, organ donation hasn't always been at the forefront. In fact, until this year, Ingham had not had an organ donor since 2005. Because of the efforts of the people receiving this award, organ donation is a top priority. The Ingham Regional Medical Center Critical Care Team has instituted a system that ensures that no opportunity will be missed, and no potentially life-saving gift will be ignored. Organ referral calls are up almost six-fold so far this year over 2007. Ingham has not only handled standard organ donations successfully this year, it has for the first time pursued Donation after Cardiac Death donations. As one nurse put it, "It's our job to honor the wishes of families and patients to help others. This is what we do." Ingham has dramatically turned the corner, in collaboration with its Gift of Life partners and greater success lies ahead. The Professional Service Award goes to Jodi Strong, Karen Squiers, Ryan Robison, Brenda Fisher, Sue Lathrom, and Carol Jones; The Ingham Regional Medical Center Critical Care Team.

- **Dr. Eric Feucht, intensivist, Bronson Methodist Hospital**

Dr. Eric Feucht is a doctor who has always gone above and beyond to help honor the wishes of families and make donation happen. Gift of Life Michigan relies heavily on hospitals' intensivists to help our donation coordinators prepare for an organ donation. Dr. Feucht instantly came to mind while considering these awards. This outstanding doctor has always been willing and able to help. He comes in on his days off, stopping his hiking trips short sometimes, just to make sure that Gift of Life has the support that is needed. The citizens of the state, and especially anyone needing a life-saving organ transplant, are fortunate to have a champion like Dr. Eric Feucht at Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalamazoo.

To sign up on the Michigan Organ Donor Registry and receive a heart sticker on the front of your driver's license to signify that you want to become an organ and tissue donor, go to www.giftoflifemichigan.org.

Gift of Life Michigan is the state's federally designated full-service organ and tissue recovery organization that acts as the intermediary between donors, physicians and hospital staff.