

Donate Life California: A Campaign Launch Case Study

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Abstract

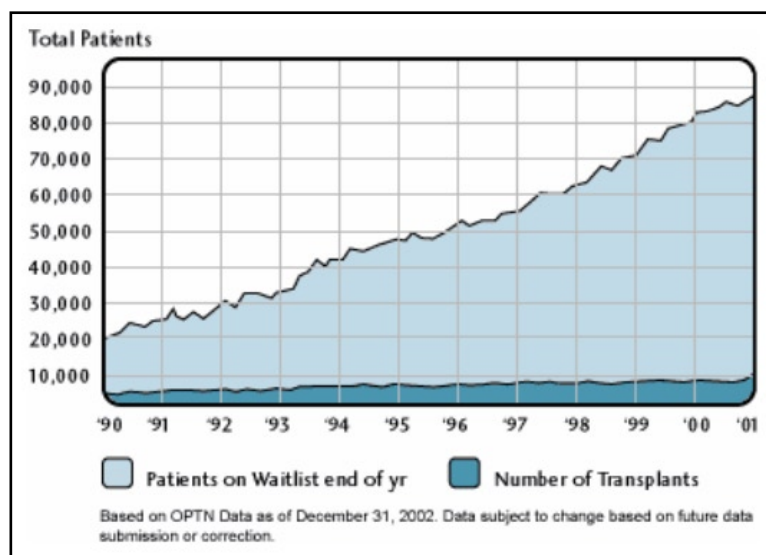
In April 2005, Donate Life California launched California's first online organ donor registry called the "Donate Life California Registry." This confidential database allows Californians to share their organ donation wishes by registering online. To compel Californians to become organ donors by registering online, the Donate Life team engaged hospital partners, media partners, and community partners. The campaign's four-fold challenge was to: (1) redefine and reposition organ donation as a public health problem for Californians, (2) educate the public and the media about the lack of organ donors, (3) spread awareness using community collaboration and media advocacy strategies, and (4) adopt a single call to action compelling Californians to become organ donors by registering online. Launched with the goal of registering 15,000 people in 12 months, the registry attracted more than 175,000 registrations in the first six months. The online registry's success was driven by a well-crafted strategic communication campaign underpinned by two core strategies-- media advocacy, and grassroots support within local communities. The comprehensive campaign supporting the registry's launch provides a useful model for public health practitioners.

Introduction: Donate Life California

Every organ and tissue donor can save and enhance the lives of up to 50 different people.* Yet the demand for organ transplants has always outstripped supply, and it continues to grow exponentially (see **Figure 1**). Close to 95,000 people are now waiting for an organ transplant in the United States, up from 80,000 in 2001.† In California there are more than 19,000 people in need of an organ transplant,‡ one third of whom will die while waiting for an organ.¹ Someone is added to the transplant waiting list every 12 minutes, and up to 18 people die everyday waiting for an organ transplant.²

While 90% of Americans agree that organ donation is a positive medical advancement, only 30% of these Americans have legally recorded their organ donation wishes.‡ The lack of organs is explained in general by the avoidance of end of life issues, common to most Western cultures, and more specifically by the lack of knowledge about legal organ donation, which is complicated by common misperceptions and misinformation. Without a legal record, the organ donation decision remains with family members who do not always know their loved one's organ donation wishes. One breakthrough solution has been

Figure 1. United States Organ Waiting List, 1991-2001



Data from UNOS. Available at <http://www.unos.org/helpSaveALife/promoteOrganDonation/>

* Heneghan D, Public Affairs Manager, California Transplant Donor Network. Personal communication: Oral. November 22, 2005.

† According to the United Network for Organ Sharing Organ Procurement and Transplant Network there are 94,702 people on the waiting list as of January 14, 2007 at 11:28 am. Available at: <http://www.unos.org/>.

‡ According to the United Network for Organ Sharing Organ Procurement and Transplant Network there are 19,789 Californians on the waiting list as of January 14, 2007 at 11:31 am <http://www.unos.org/>.

§ Heneghan, D. Public Affairs Manager, California Transplant Donor Network. Personal communication: Interview April 3, 2007.

the online organ registry, which now nearly 30 states have implemented.

California's online registry, the "Donate Life California Registry," first authorized by Senator Jackie Speier in 2001, allows Californians to explicitly share their organ donation wishes in an online database. Before the bill allowing this registry was passed, Californians simply relied on the driver's license pink donor dot to indicate organ donation wishes, but even this sticker was not legally binding. When California's first online registry was launched in 2005, Donate Life California catapulted a confronting, easily ignored issue on to the agenda of a then apathetic public and disinterested media. The campaign focused on educating the public about the importance of organ donation, call-

ing Californians to act, and breaking through the apathy and discomfort associated with becoming an organ donor. Officially launched April 4, 2005, the organ donation registry was built with the goal of registering 15,000 people in the first 12 months. Within the first six months over 175,000 people registered.*

The Donate Life California communication campaign, strategy, execution and lessons learned will be explored in this case study.³ The launch of the registry achieved success through a multi-layer communication campaign that shares an important community message with a call to action. A brief review of the history and management of organ donation in the United States provide the starting point for this case study.

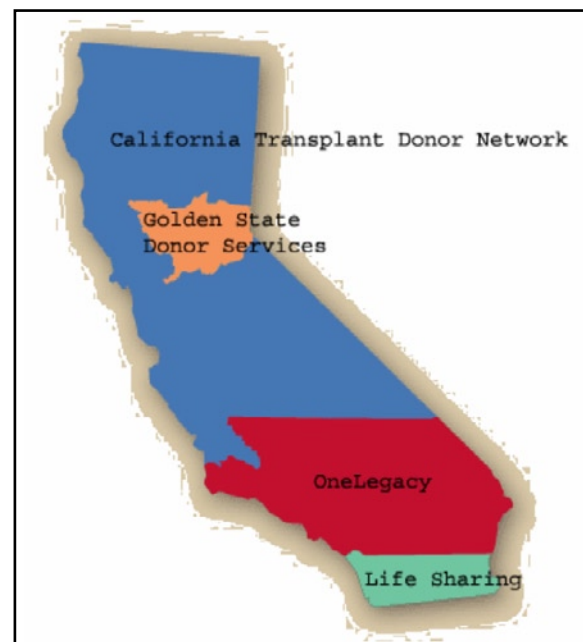
The History and Management of Organ Donation and Donate Life

Although the first successful kidney transplant was performed in 1954, Congress did not pass the National Organ Transplant Act to manage the recovery and placement of organs for transplantation until 1984.⁴ This Act prohibited the sale of organs and created a national Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).⁵ The non-profit organization United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) created the first computer-based organ matching system in 1977. As a result, in 1986 HHS charged UNOS with responsibility for the national OPTN contract. Organ donations in the United States have since been managed through the master UNOS registry. This registry closely monitors and tracks every organ donation in the nation, and collects data on organ donors, recipients, success rates, metropolitan areas, and more.

When an organ donor is identified, the transplant coordinator at the hospital uploads critical physiological information into the centralized computer network, which ranks potential recipients according to blood type, immune

system status, distance from the transplant center, tissue match, and time spent on the waiting list. In some cases the medical urgency of the possible recipient is also calculated.⁵ A ranked list of recipients is generated each time an organ becomes available and the first person on this list is offered the organ. If the person selected is unavailable, or is not healthy enough to undergo major surgery, the organ will be offered to the next person on the ranked list. This process continues until a match is made. Typically, the organ is offered to patients locally, then regionally, and finally nationally until a recipient is found or the window for a successful transplantation has closed.

Figure 2. California OPO Coverage Areas from the Donate Life California Web Site



People die everyday waiting for organs due to an overwhelming demand and an underwhelming “supply” of donor organs; in 2004, four Californian organ procurement organizations (OPO) joined forces to develop a solution to this problem. The California Transplant Donor Network, Golden State Donor Services, OneLegacy, and Lifesharing collaborated to become Donate Life California (see **Figure 2**), the Californian arm of the

national Donate Life campaign, sponsored by the Coalition on Donation. (More can be learned about the Coalition on Donation at www.donatelife.net.) The Coalition on Donation is an alliance of national non-profit organizations that joined together with the mission of inspiring “all people to donate life through organ, eye and tissue donation.”⁶ The national Donate Life campaign relies on the support of 47 local chapters and partner organizations to educate the public

about organ donation and to disseminate messages and materials. Affiliation with this national campaign provided Donate Life California with access to pre-branded materials including a logo, marketing materials, updated transplant facts and statistics, and pre-taped radio and television public service announcements (see **Figure 3**). Donate Life California purchased these materials from the national campaign and incorporated the Donate Life California logo.

Figure 3. Screen Shot of the National Donate Life America’s Web Page for California



Joining of Forces: Strategy

Before the creation of the online registry, no formal registry for organ donation existed in California. Willing donors may have placed a pink donor dot sticker on their driver's license, but many who did that failed to share their organ donation wishes with family members. For this reason, in 2004 Donate Life's California team pooled resources to hire a reputable software firm to build a revolutionary large-scale database prototype that would enable online donor registration. The need to increase minority organ donation was also recognized, so a Spanish version of the Web site, connected to the database, was built to reach out to the growing Spanish-speaking population in California. This site can

be accessed at www.donevida.org. All the donor data gathered on both the English and Spanish Web sites required extensive protection resulting in complex software infrastructure.

The team began planning for the public launch of the online registry in October 2004 (see **Table 1**). To provide communications expertise and support, the team hired JDI Communications Inc., a Los Angeles-based company specializing in corporate, marketing, and public relations services. JDI's track record in the health care sector was borne out by a client portfolio that included AHI Healthcare, Amgen, and Beckman Instruments. This expertise was an important de-

Table 1. Timeline of the Donate Life California Launch

MONTH	ACTIVITY
OCTOBER 2004	DONATE LIFE CALIFORNIA SELECTS JDI COMMUNICATIONS TO HANDLE PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITY.
NOVEMBER	DONATE LIFE CALIFORNIA TEAM MEETS TO DISCUSS GOALS, AUDIENCES, AND MESSAGES.
DECEMBER	DISCUSSIONS CONTINUE ABOUT TARGETS AND GOALS FOR THE CAMPAIGN.
JANUARY 2005	JDI FACILITATES LARGE WORKSHOPS WITH COMMUNITY INFLUENCERS TO FLOAT IDEAS, BRAINSTORM SOLUTIONS, AND STRATEGIES FOR THE ROLL OUT OF THE ONLINE REGISTRY.
FEBRUARY	WORKSHOP TEAM CONDUCTS WEEKLY PHONE CONFERENCE CALLS.
MARCH	MARCH CONFERENCE CALLS CONTINUE. THE TEAMS ARE PITCHING THE MEDIA AND SETTING UP SPONSORSHIPS.
APRIL	THE REGISTRY IS LAUNCHED ON APRIL 5, 2005. MEDIA RELEASES AND PSAs ARE SENT OUT; TWELVE PRESS CONFERENCES ARE HELD ON LAUNCH DAY; OPINION-EDITORIAL PIECES ARE SENT TO MAJOR METRO NEWSPAPERS.

ciding factor for the Donate Life team.¹⁴ Once hired, JDI immediately called a strategy meeting to discuss the goals and capabilities of Donate Life California. Working together, the consultants and Donate Life California exhaustively segmented the audiences in the organ donation process. The group then developed specific messages for each of these targeted audiences that would accompany the single call to action, asking Californians

to become organ and tissue donors by registering online. Organizers pushed the idea that by simply registering organ donation wishes in the online registry, anyone can save a life. With plans to continually educate the public about the myths and facts of organ donation, Donate Life California and the four Californian OPOs resolved that all forthcoming communication would support this “unflinching message.”*

¹⁴ Bell R. JDI Communication. Personal communication: Written. December 6, 2005.

Workshops: Planning

To gain support from the community and to build partnerships, the team staged two large workshops—one in Northern California and the other in Southern California. The purpose of these workshops was two-fold: to attract the collaboration and commitment/ ownership of local leaders, and to generate campaign ideas.* More than 75 participants attended the Northern California workshop, including hospital and transplant center representatives, community thought leaders, clergy, and politicians. These participants broke into small groups to share their thoughts about the campaign direction, immediate steps and actions to be taken, and their notions for providing help in the quest for more registered organ donors.*.µ The daylong brainstorming session yielded in-depth discussions about the needs of each target audience, the best ways to reach out to these groups, and specific messages to target priority groups. Specific examples of these discussions included: hospital representatives needing to know how to access the registry if they have a potential donor; community leaders and politicians wanting to learn more about organ donation to help spread the messages; and clergy members needing information regarding religious beliefs to dispel common misconceptions.

From these discussions, the team created specific messages and execution activities geared toward the needs of each group (see **Table 2**, next page, for a breakdown of the target audiences and the key messages). For example, the team wrote and sent letters to the 27 Transplant Centers to educate these professionals about the new registry and describe how the registry would ease their job in fulfilling patient's wishes.

After the community workshops succeeded in generating extensive grassroots support, ideas for persuasive messages, and effective communication channels, Donate Life California and JDI used the workshop findings to refine campaign messages, develop timelines, and devise action plans (see **Table 1** for general timeline of campaign activities). With such a large-scale multi-faceted campaign, weekly conference calls provided a venue for discussions about campaign progress. These weekly discussions fostered open communication and allowed for tracking of various task forces created to attack different challenges and carry out separate campaign programs. All campaign efforts were aimed at launching the online registry on April 4, 2005 to coincide with National Donate Life Month.*.µ

Table 2. Execution of Key Messages

AUDIENCE	DESCRIPTION	MESSAGES	EXECUTION
PUBLIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DONOR FAMILIES • GENERAL PUBLIC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YOU CAN SAVE A LIFE. • GO ONLINE TO SIGN UP FOR THE REGISTRY. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE • REGISTRY DRIVES • POSTERS, FLIERS • SPONSORSHIPS
TRANSPLANT CENTERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27 HOSPITALS IN CALIFORNIA THAT PERFORM ORGAN TRANSPLANTS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEW ONLINE REGISTRY WILL HELP EASE YOUR JOB IN FULFILLING PATIENT’S WISHES. • HELP US SPREAD THE WORD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LETTERS TO TRANSPLANT CENTERS • INVITATION TO WORKSHOP
HOSPITALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HUNDREDS OF HOSPITALS THROUGHOUT CALIFORNIA THAT SPEAK WITH FAMILIES ABOUT ORGAN DONATION. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO BRING THE REGISTRY TO THE DMV. • HELP US SPREAD THE WORD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LETTERS TO HOSPITALS • PERSONAL CONVERSATIONS WITH THOSE WHO WORK IN TRANSPLANTATION • INVITATION TO WORKSHOP
COMMUNITY LEADER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CONSISTS OF INFLUENTIAL “MOVERS AND SHAKERS” IN THE COMMUNITY: LOCAL CELEBRITIES, ATHLETES, ETC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REGISTER ON THE NEW ONLINE REGISTRY. • USE INFLUENCE TO HELP SPREAD THE WORD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PERSONAL CALLS • LETTERS TO COMMUNITY LEADERS • INVITATION TO WORKSHOP
CLERGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RELIGIOUS LEADERS WHO CAN CLARIFY THAT ORGAN DONATION IS NOT AGAINST THE TENETS OF THEIR RELIGION. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EXPLAIN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS ABOUT ORGAN DONATION. • ENCOURAGE CONGREGATION TO REGISTER ONLINE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FACE TO FACE MEETINGS • RELIGIOUS TOOL KITS • INVITATION TO WORKSHOP
MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OTHER MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS LIKE THE NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION THAT WOULD BENEFIT FROM ORGAN DONATION. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PARTNER WITH US TO HELP US SPREAD THE MESSAGE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN • DIRECT CONVERSATIONS WITH LEADERS • INVITATION TO WORKSHOP
POLITICAL LEADERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GOVERNMENT LEADERS WHO WILL INFLUENCE VITAL LEGISLATION REGARDING ORGAN DONATION. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ONLINE REGISTRY IS IMPORTANT. • WE NEED THE DMV TO HOST THE WEB SITE AND COLLECT DATA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN • INVITATION TO WORKSHOP

Tiered Priorities: Execution

With a pressing deadline, the team prioritized the many ideas emerging from the workshops, applying a tier system to organize implementation and to assign the task forces that would take action. The first tier of the campaign focused on promotion of the online registry and organ donation issues

through media advocacy. The second tier focused on registry drives and the third tier focused on reaching people without online access. Other promotional activities such as partnerships and sponsorships were incorporated within all three tiers.

Tier 1: Media Advocacy

Media advocacy efforts focused on re-framing and repositioning media coverage of the organ donation issue from that of a personal problem affecting individuals and their families, to that of a public health issue affecting all Californians. Media advocacy is a tool used by public health groups to tell their own story while promoting social change.⁷ It is a tool that combines traditional media relations strategies and tactics, such as building relationships with reporters, with community advocacy approaches. Media advocacy is more commonly used in public health communication challenges to address controversial issues, in which the public tends to be under-informed or misinformed.⁷

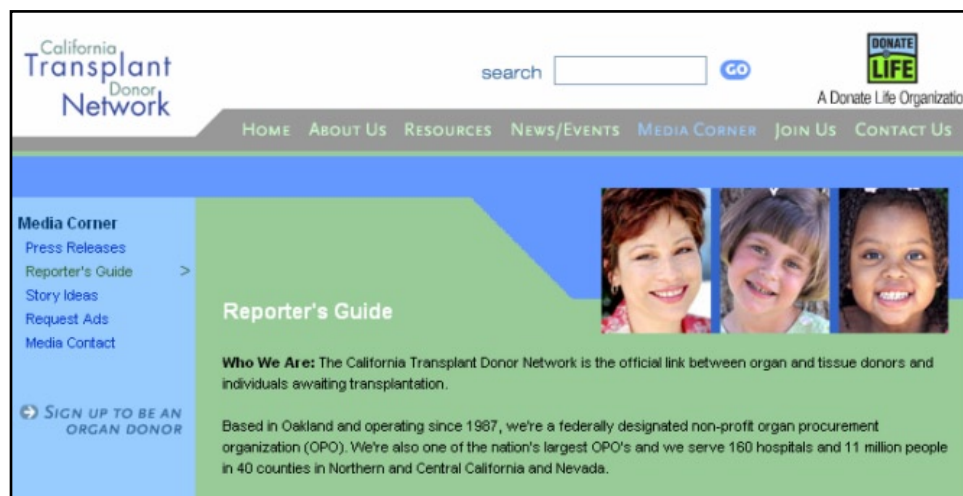
The subject of organ donation is uncomfortable, even taboo, for many people and usually attracts only intermittent media coverage. A more robust focus was placed on gaining media coverage of the issue, by Donate Life California campaign planners describing how low donation rates affect all Californians. The goal of this strategy was to compel the media to give more attention to the issue, which supported public educa-

tion objectives. A vital element of this campaign focused on targeting and educating the key news media organizations as well as individual reporters. In so doing, the team aimed to build the news media's agenda influencing both the frequency and quality of media coverage of organ donation issues.⁸ To assert the importance of organ donation and reposition it as a public health issue, the team implemented several media advocacy tactics to help reporters produce news that would attract public attention and tell the organ donation story more effectively.^{7,9}

Media Kits

Prior to the launch, the team created a media kit to assist reporters with the news-gathering process. The kit was provided to key media to help inspire compelling stories and present the most up-to-date information about organ donation. All of the materials included key messages about the creation and benefit of the registry, as well as additional organ donation facts and statistics. For example, the "Reporter's Guide" (see **Figure 4**, next page) detailed information about the Donate Life California campaign,

Figure 4. Portion of the Reporter’s Guide on the California Transplant Donor Network Website (www.ctdn.org)



transplant centers, and how the organ donation process and online registry function. The kit included fact sheets, which focused on specific organ donor topics, statistics about the growing waiting list, and pamphlets entitled, “Faith Based Efforts,” which focused on how clergy members can discuss organ donation with their congregations. Also included were fact sheets called “Community Outreach,” which focused on specific statistics and information about the African American, Latino, Chinese, and Filipino communities, as well as a discussion of common misconceptions about organ donation. Information about the serious lack of minority donors, which results in a lack of organs for minorities on the waiting list was also included. The information collected for the media kit was also posted on the Web sites of the four OPOs. These media kits appeared to be a success as many of the reporters tackled some of the key issues outlined in the materials in news stories announcing the online registry.

Media Releases and Public Service Announcements

In advance of the launch, the team prepared media releases for print and broadcast me-

dia, as well as scripts for live radio public service announcements. The media releases were crafted to cover various newsworthy angles appropriate for the different news media outlets and their audiences. For example, the plight of minorities on the donor waiting list was highlighted for Hispanic and other ethnic media. The public service announcements, purchased from the national Donate Life America campaign, were timed to announce the launch of the registry while educating the public about organ donation.¹⁰ To create initial buzz about the launch, the first registry preview press release (see **Appendix A**), was issued on March 15, 2005. On the day of the launch, the live radio PSA ran on several radio stations, which agreed to donate additional free advertising with the purchase of a paid advertising package. The four OPOs issued media releases announcing the development of the online registry. To supplement these media releases, the team also sent a Press Conference Advisory (see **Appendix B**) inviting media to one of 12 simultaneous news conferences held across California.*

News Conferences

At 10:00 am on the morning of April 4, 2005, news media from all areas of California were invited to attend one of 12 simultaneous news conferences held throughout the state (see **Appendix C** for a list of launched news conferences). This large-scale media event required months of task force planning. Each news conference included a key spokesperson, who was supported by other speakers such as local celebrities, organ donors, organ recipients, hospital representatives, and people waiting on the organ list. Reporters were encouraged to ask the experts and spokespeople any questions about the new registry or the call to action asking Californians to become organ donors by signing up on the registry.

Op-Eds and Briefings

Following the initial launch day, Donate Life California crafted opinion-editorial articles authored by relevant experts for major newspapers, and offered in-person briefings with all the major metro newspapers. These opinion pieces shared the views of organ donation advocates while educating the public about the current organ donation situation. This tactic provided the opportunity to have in-depth discussions about crucial issues, such as the lack of minority donation (see **Appendix D** for links to news stories on the launch of the registry).

Tier 2: Community Outreach: Registry Drives and Partnerships

After the extensive media push, the Donate Life California team sustained campaign momentum at the community level with a series of registry drives. The team led a series of registry drives throughout the state and shared tactical information among the four OPOs. For example, in the Bay Area, online registry stations were set up in four major federal buildings alongside established bone marrow registration kiosks. In Southern California, mayors sponsored a competition called “City Challenge”¹⁴ to see which city could register the most residents per capita. In a similar competition, medical students challenged students at other Californian universities to sign up on the registry.

Donate Life California sought partnerships with key leaders to get out in the community. Specifically, the team reached out to the faith-based community with tools, such as church bulletins, announcements, and sermon topics for religious leaders to use with their congregations. The team sought this partnership to dispel the misconception that organ donation is against religious beliefs and increase awareness about the need for organ donors. In addition, the team sought partnerships with key political figures that could help spread the word about the new registry. The success of these community outreach programs was measured by a questionnaire on the Donate Life California Web site, which will be discussed later.

Tier 3: Reaching People Without Access

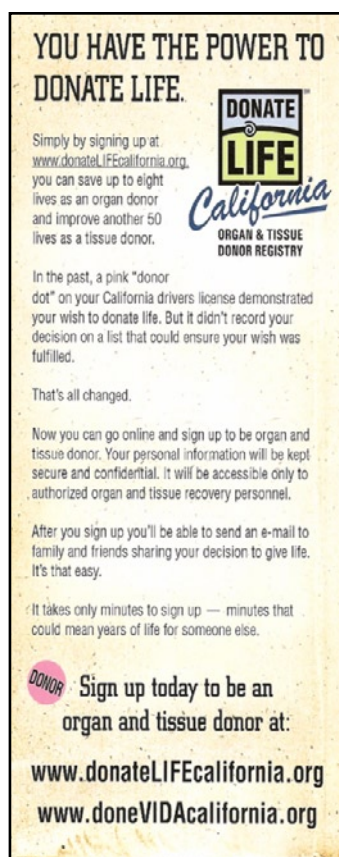
All communication efforts shared the same call to action: become an organ donor by registering online; but, what about the people who do not have access to the Internet? The Donate Life California team wanted to ensure that everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status, would be able to register. To address this need, the team partnered with public libraries in several cities throughout the state. At the libraries Donate Life California posters, literature, and table top signs

were placed around the public computers to encourage people to sign up on the new registry. Librarians were trained to help library patrons use the computers to register online. The team found that over 2,000 people joined the registry from a public library location. The online donor registry was eventually linked to the California Department of Motor Vehicles, which gives all Californians, regardless of their Internet access status, the opportunity to register.

Other Activities: Sponsorships and Partners

Donate Life California relied heavily on its partners throughout all tiers to help spread word of the new registry. By sending information, posters, and fliers to medical associations and other non-profit groups like the National Kidney Foundation, American Heart Association, California Medical Associates, National Blood Bank and others, Donate Life California was able to tap into populations with a direct interest in promoting organ donation (see **Figure 5** for sample flier). With the help of generous sponsors and partners, Donate Life California

Figure 5. Image of a Donate Life California Flier



was able to build awareness for the registry through fun promotional activities. For example, the NASCAR Association created Donate Life decals for racecars, professional athletic teams, like the San Francisco Giants, the Oakland A's, and



2005 “Many Families One Gift” Tournament of Roses Parade Float courtesy of www.donatelifefloat.org.

the Fresno Falcons touted the new registry during games, and the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade pledged a Donate Life float celebrating organ donation (see above for an image of the 2005 float).¹⁴

Success: Measurement

Through the hosting Web sites, www.donateLIFEcalifornia.org and the Spanish version at www.doneVIDAcalifornia.org, the team tracked the success of the massive launch campaign counting every visit, registration, link, and more. The initial goal for the registry was 15,000 registrants in the first twelve months. Within the first six months, more than 175,000 people registered. To track promotional efforts on a macro level, the team placed additional measurement tools on the Web site registration form with the question, “How did you hear about us?” A drop down box appears with the following options: newspaper, city challenge, friend, family, TV, radio, hospital, DMV, cinema advertisement, and other. These options changed depending on the campaign activities that were underway at the time.

When the Donate Life California campaign was launched, the DMV was not yet connected to the registry. Today, DMV referrals are by far the most influential source of donor registrations. According to David Heneghan, Public Affairs Manager of the California Transplant Donor Network, the evaluation process of capturing how donors first learned about the registry was somewhat successful. After evaluating the answers to the online questionnaire, the team learned the second-most important influence in organ donation decisions are friends and family followed by “other,” which ranks third. The news media is the fourth most influential, followed by community organizations such as the National Kidney Foundation.^β

An important limitation for understanding the results of this evaluation, and the overall campaign, is the lack of information about the third highest-ranked influence described only as “other” in the online questionnaire. What exactly did “other” entail? The limitations of the programming did not allow the team to capture this information. The team also found that many donors did not fill out how they heard about the campaign, which affects the accuracy of the collected data. Lastly, the team found if more than four or five options were listed in the online questionnaire, many donors would simply just choose the first option and move on. To combat this, the team limited the number of available options. These evaluation limitations clearly skew the overall data, however, the data still provide some meaningful indications of the most popular ways donors learned about the registry.^β

In addition to tracking Web site registrants, the team tracked the number of news stories that appeared during the launch of the registry, and the subsequent news coverage that appeared after the launch. In all, the launch received more than 200 media stories in the first few months.^μ This media coverage contributed significantly to educating Californians about organ donation issues and spreading awareness about the new registry. The majority of news media coverage emerged in the first two weeks of the campaign and then leveled off, while the registry continued to receive an average of 5,000 registrants each week during the first months of the campaign.

Moving Ahead

Through media advocacy and community-based efforts, the Donate Life California campaign exponentially exceeded the original campaign goal of 15,000 registrants by 160,000 registrants. This success inspired the team to continue efforts to reach all 35 million Californian residents.¹¹ To help reach this goal, Senator Jackie Speier proposed a bill to link the California DMV state driver's license application to the Donate Life California online registry. This bill, passed on October 11, 2005, allows driver's

license and I.D. card applicants to register as organ donors on the DMV online application form.¹² Since the DMV link to the registry launched in July 2006, approximately 25,000 new Californians register each week, and by January 2007, one million Californians had registered.^ø The campaign planners are now focusing efforts on corporations to develop employer-sponsored events and activities to raise awareness about organ donation and educate employees about the registry.^β

^ø Heneghan D, Public Affairs Manager, California Transplant Donor Network. Personal Communication: Written. January 30, 2007

Lessons Learned

Donate Life California developed a plan, comprised of four stages—research, plan-

ning, execution, and evaluation. A critique of each campaign stage follows.

Research and Planning

Based on initial research revealing an alarming lack of organ donors with an increasing demand for donor organs, Donate Life California formed to address organ donation issues in California. The team hosted workshops to involve the community, to not only gather insight about organ donation perspectives, and solicit support from key community leaders, but also to build relationships and foster dialogue between the team and target audiences. By conducting initial research through discussion with these audiences, the team was in a better position to develop messages that accurately reflected the current understanding of organ donation. The team learned important lessons about the difficulty of mobilizing such a large group of people through a single meeting. Looking back, campaign planners believe the meeting's agenda was too extensive. Educating participants about the issues, the registry, and discussing campaign ideas left little time to achieve the level of participant commitment needed to then assign tasks. While the team followed up with interested participants via email, commitments

achieved face-to-face at the initial meetings produced better results for the campaign.

These meetings were important for providing critical informal research, specifically the development of a situation analysis of the needs of different community groups and their attitudes toward organ donation. This research enabled the team to create relevant streamlined messages and segment target audiences, which is a vital and often overlooked campaign step that can lead to the success or failure of a meaningful health campaign.^{13,14} Donate Life California faced the challenge of bringing life to an alarming issue many tiptoe around or avoid. It focused messages on the lives saved and enhanced by organ donation, rather than the loss of life associated with the issue, and it shared individual's personal stories, while discussing organ donation as a public health issue affecting all Californians.¹⁵ This strategic approach to media advocacy helped focus attention on the benefits of organ donation and compelled donors to register.

Execution

When compiling all the ideas gleaned from the meetings, the team focused on those that were easy to attain and realistic. With a limited budget, time frame, and team,

the planners strategically focused on activities—media advocacy and various grassroots efforts—which would produce meaningful results and assist in the development of stra-

tegic plans to carry out these activities. Task forces implemented media advocacy tools and built community partnerships to bolster the credibility and effectiveness of the health campaign. Coordinating this large-scale launch required months of planning and collaboration between many groups, a necessary exercise for the success of any campaign.¹⁶ While collaborating with groups, such as the faith community and hospitals, Donate Life California empowered community leaders with campaign objectives and gave ownership of the campaign to the leaders and their communities.¹⁷ This tactic not only brought Donate Life California's messages into the community, it also sparked a successful word-of-mouth marketing campaign encouraging people to talk about organ donation issues. When tracking the Web site, the team found that word-of-mouth, or "family and friends," was the second most popular way people heard about the campaign. This community-building technique is vital to the success and sustainability of any public health campaign and efforts should be made to incorporate this tactic into future campaigns.¹⁸ Without involving the community in the planning, the campaign may not resonate as well with the audiences.^{14,19} However, this execution strategy relies heav-

ily on other people to carry out initial campaign messages—a risky tactic that can fail if spokespeople are not effectively trained or misinterpret campaign messages. Using credible campaign ambassadors from across the state, Donate Life California provided a wide range of spokespeople who could effectively address the medical elements of organ donation and speak about the personal side of the issue.¹³ These spokespeople not only provided reporters with the latest data and personal stories, they also jumpstarted discussions about organ donation issues.

With regard to media advocacy efforts, early planning allowed the team to identify and build relationships with influential reporters. The campaign's key messages were conveyed in supporting media materials, such as media kits, news releases and public service announcements, which were provided directly to the news media to make the messages easily accessible and help the media develop stories, which would eventually reach the public.⁸ The 12 simultaneous news conferences and key opinion-editorial articles were also important tactics in the campaign to sway public opinion and influence policy makers about the importance of the organ donor registry.⁷

Evaluation

Metrics are vital for justifying efforts and quickly reshaping the course of a campaign if current efforts are ineffective, which builds flexibility into a campaign. By providing these insights, other public health professionals can learn from past efforts in hopes of creating more effective media advocacy campaigns.^{7,20} Creating measurement tools and benchmarks prior to the launch of the campaign, the team accurately tracked its growth and highlighted milestones, such

as the addition of the one millionth Californian on the registry. The Web site captured visits and the small questionnaire attached to the application captured how donors heard about the campaign. Although this questionnaire provided some useful information, the data were incomplete due to respondent attrition. In addition, many respondents checked "other" but the software did not provide a space for respondents to indicate exactly what "other" meant. It would be wise

for other campaigns to initially build this capability, as well as other evaluative capabilities, into the programming at the onset to ensure accurate measurement.

Using news clipping services, the team quantified news coverage of the campaign launch, providing an important indicator of the reach and frequency of media advocacy efforts in terms of media coverage; however, there are two limitations of this measure. First, impressions do not necessarily equate to how many readers fully read and comprehended the articles, yet the measure does provide a rough estimate of readership. Second, this measure ignores the content

and campaign messages incorporated in the news articles. It is important to analyze the content of the news stories to understand the areas reporters focused on and the key messages the public was exposed to. This activity can benefit the campaign by highlighting the messages that are and are not appearing in the media coverage. Knowing this information may cause campaign planners to make minor adjustments to the messages or the delivery of those messages. Unfortunately, this type of measurement requires significant time and effort, which Donate Life California was channeling toward outreach and education efforts.

Conclusion

Overall, the launch of the Donate Life California Registry brought attention to an alarming issue that receives little attention, compelling more than one million Californians to become organ donors. The campaign was expertly researched, planned, and executed by planners who built solid relationships with key community leaders, partner organizations, and the media. These relationships, along with the credibility Do-

nate Life California gleaned from the launch of the campaign, helped the organization sustain the campaign goals and continually expand the organ donor registry, which is helping address the lack of donor organs. The strategies and tactics described in this campaign launch, specifically the use of media advocacy and grassroots partnerships, can serve as a guide for informing future public health communication initiatives.

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Appendix

Appendix A. First News Release Sent out on March 15, 2005 Announcing the Registry.

www.donateLIFecalifornia.org



www.doneVIDAcalifornia.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts: Rivian Bell or Debra Stolberg, JDI Communications, Inc., (213) 612-4927, (888) 477-4319
(24/7), jdcomm@ix.netcom.com or rlb@abmac.com

CALIFORNIA LAUNCHES FIRST ONLINE STATE ORGAN, TISSUE DONOR REGISTRY APRIL 4

Donate Life California Registry Represents Major Resource to Optimize Donation; 18,000 Californians Now Wait for Life-Saving Transplants

Sacramento, Oakland, Los Angeles, and San Diego, Calif. – Mar. 15, 2005 – A new era for organ and tissue donation in California begins April 4 when the state's first online registry goes into effect. The **Donate Life California Organ & Tissue Donor Registry** is a confidential database that allows those who work or live in California to clearly state their commitments to donate life by signing up at www.donateLIFecalifornia.org or the Spanish-language site, www.doneVIDAcalifornia.org.

The launch of the Donate Life California Registry in April coincides with the beginning of National Donate Life Month, a program designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to help raise public awareness of the critical need for organ, tissue, bone marrow and blood donation.

"I, along with the 18,000 Californians waiting for a transplant, am elated that this day of hope has arrived to our state," said Senator Jackie Speier of San Francisco/San Mateo, who authored the bills that established the Donate Life California Registry. "For hope is what the Donate Life California Registry represents to people like one-year-old Mia Herndon. Mia just wants to grow up, but first needs a new liver and a new kidney. With the launch of the Donate Life California Registry, together we now have the power to save Mia and thousands of other Californians. I urge you: take a few moments today and sign up on the Donate Life California Registry. Those minutes can translate into years of life for someone else – someone like little Mia Herndon."

The Donate Life California Registry is dedicated to giving every person awaiting a transplant a second chance at life — and ensuring that every organ and tissue donor's wishes are respected. Each person who signs up on the Donate Life California Registry has the potential to save up to eight lives as an organ donor and enhance up to 50 others through tissue donation.

"Contrary to popular belief, the pink 'donor dot' obtained with drivers license renewals has never been recorded in any central registry that medical professionals could access in time of need," stated Tracy Bryan, president of Donate Life California, the not-for-profit organization that administers the organ and tissue registry.

"With the Donate Life California Registry, that will change. For the first time, Californians will have a resource that takes the guesswork out of the process – individuals now have an effective tool to ensure their commitments to save lives are carried out. And it will spare family members from having to make decisions about donation during times of intense grief. Californians deserve no less."

- MORE -

1760 Creekside Oaks Drive, Suite 160 Sacramento, CA 95833 916-567-1600 FAX 916-567-8300
www.donateLIFecalifornia.org www.doneVIDAcalifornia.org

Appendix B. News Advisory for the Palo Alto, California Area.

www.donateLIFEcalifornia.org



www.doneVIDAcalifornia.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Conference Advisory

DONATE LIFE CALIFORNIA ONLINE TISSUE, DONOR REGISTRY LAUNCHES IN PALO ALTO Mon., April 4, 2005 – 10:00 a.m.

What: April takes on new meaning this year as communities focus attention on organ, tissue and blood donation in conjunction with the April 4 launch of the **Donate Life California Organ & Tissue Donor Registry**. The month-long program kicks off with a press conference at Stanford University, along with 11 other simultaneous statewide press conferences, to inform residents about the registry and to honor National Donate Life Month.

The Donate Life California Registry is a confidential database that provides an opportunity for Californians to clearly state their commitments to donate life by signing up at www.donateLIFEcalifornia.org or the Spanish-language site, www.doneVIDAcalifornia.org.

Who: **Jim Burch** – Mayor of Palo Alto, who will be presenting a proclamation from the city declaring April 4, 2005 as Donate Life California Day in commemoration of the state's first online organ donor registry
Dr. Philip Pizzo – Dean, School of Medicine, Stanford University
Dr. Carlos Esquivel – Chief, Division of Transplantation, Stanford Medical Center
Liz Oosterhuis – Stanford University medical student and Organ Donor Education Club liaison
Colleen Baptista (Milbrae) – Donor mom, whose son Tim died in an accident at age 20
Vincente Agor (San Francisco) – Kidney/pancreas recipient
Christopher Truxaw – Heart recipient and student at Stanford University
Patti Childress (San Jose) – Has been on the waiting list for a kidney since 2000

When: Monday, April 4, 2005 – 10:00 a.m.

Where: White Plaza - Tresidder Union
459 Lagunita Dr., Stanford, CA 94305
Stanford University – 650.723-2300, Parking and Transportation – 650-723-9362

Contact: Cathy Olmo, Volunteer Outreach Coordinator, California Transplant Donor Network, 925-324-7043, colmo@ctdn.org

Debra Stolberg or Rivian Bell, JDI Communications, (213) 612-4929, (888) 477-4319 (24/7 pager), or email at rlb@abmac.com

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www.donateLIFEcalifornia.org www.doneVIDAcalifornia.org

Appendix C. List of 12 News Conferences.

www.donateLIFEcalifornia.org



www.doneVIDAcalifornia.org

Launch Press Conferences

You are invited to join the press conferences nearest you on Monday, April 4 at 10am. Kindly notify the contact person if you or a member of your staff will be attending.

SACRAMENTO AREA

Golden State Donor Services – Contact: Tracy Bryan, 916-567-1600, tbryan@dcids.org		
Sacramento	California State Capitol	Room 1190

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

California Transplant Donor Network – Contact: David Heneghan, 510-444-8500, dheneghan@ctdn.org		
San Francisco	S.F. Medical Society	1409 Sutter St., San Francisco 94109
Oakland	Glad Tidings Church of God in Christ	27689 Tyrrell Ave., Hayward, 94544
Palo Alto/San Jose	Stanford University	White Plaza (adjacent to Tresidder Union) 459 Lagunita Dr., Stanford 94305
Fresno	University Medical Center	North Auditorium 445 S. Cedar Ave., Fresno 93702

GREATER LOS ANGELES AREA

OneLegacy – Contact: Tenaya Wallace, 213-401-1011, twallace@onelegacy.org		
Los Angeles	L.A. County+USC Medical Center	General Hospital steps
Torrance	Harbor-UCLA Medical Center	A.F. Parlow Library Auditorium 1000 West Carson St., Torrance 90509
Loma Linda	Loma Linda University Medical Center	Wong Kerlee International Conference Ctr. 11234 Anderson St., Loma Linda
Orange	St Joseph Hospital	Sister Elizabeth Building, Conf. Rm. 4 1300 Palmyra Ave., Orange, 92668
Bakersfield	Countrywide Mortgage	9100 Ming Ave., Bakersfield 91311
Santa Barbara	Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital	2400 Bath St., Santa Barbara 93102

SAN DIEGO AREA

Lifesharing – Contact: Sharon Ross, 619-521-1983 x123, ssross@ucsd.edu		
San Diego	Balboa Park	Spreckels Organ Pavilion, San Diego 92101

1760 Creekside Oaks Drive, Suite 180 Sacramento, CA 95833 916-567-1600 FAX 916-567-8300
www.donateLIFEcalifornia.org www.doneVIDAcalifornia.org

Appendix D. Links to News Coverage

Landhuis, E. (2005). New site lets organ donors register life-saving choices. San Jose Mercury News (April 5, 2005). www.ctdn.org/newsevents_news_newsitem.php?id=34

Lagos, M. (2005). California launches donor registry: Activists laud program making matches easier. The Examiner (Monday, April 4, 2005). www.ctdn.org/newsevents_news_newsitem.php?id=35