

THE LEGACY

A Publication of the Center for Donation and Transplant

Volume 8, Number 4

Organ Donation: Life for the Dying and Hope for the Living

By Sam Messina, a donor father and CDT volunteer.

AT 3:20 A.M. ON JUNE 17, 2003 my wife and I got the call that all families dread. Our only son Matthew had been critically injured in a hit-and-run in Chico, California. "You need to be here now" the ER nurse said.

The flight and drive from Albany, New York to Chico, California was the longest trip of our lives, not knowing if Matt was alive or dead, and if alive, what his life and future would be. Matt died from his injuries two days later. It is said that when you lose a parent you lose your past, and when you lose your child, you lose your and their future. We can testify that nothing could be more truthful. We will not see him be the father, uncle and friend that were undoubtedly part of his future. And he will not get to experience these life pleasures and adventures.

It hurts me still to write about the loss of our son. But I do so to tell you about the one ray of hope and light in those devastatingly dark early days. I want you to know that Matthew gave life to others and hope and awareness of life's continuity to us by giving the Gift of Life. My wife Jan and I made the decision for Matt



Matthew Messina

to donate his organs and tissues to the California Transplant Donor Network. It was the only thing at that terrible time that was the right thing to do. We could just hear our son saying "Do it Mom and Dad, you know I would make the decision if I could."

We have received word that a 54 year-old man received Matt's heart, and two women, with children, are living today because they have Matt's liver, pancreas and kidneys. The man that received Matt's heart lived for about 7 months after the transplant. We were saddened when we heard that he only lived a short while. Then we received a letter from the organ procurement organization stating that this man and his family were overjoyed that they had this gift of time to be together and it was a blessing for them.

Another recipient is a married 41 year-old mother of a 17 year-old girl. She had been in extremely poor health and if she did not receive a kidney and liver transplant at that time, she was not expected to survive. When we meet at an organ donation ceremony ten months later, with her mother in the best of health, her daughter cried because she was so glad that her mom was alive and well, but overwhelmed by the thought that our son's death had saved her mom. We gave them pictures of Matt, and we felt after just a little while as if we had known them all our lives. The other recipient is a 47 year-old mother who received Matt's other kidney and his pancreas. The dramatic and abrupt improvement in her health was a true gift to her and her family, which they wrote to us about at Christmas. They too got to "meet" Matthew in the pictures we brought of him, and the stories we told about him.

See *Organ Donation: Life and Hope*, page 2

From the Executive Director

We Can Be Heroes...

Once again the month of July will bring two special evenings that remind us all why donation is important to everyone it touches. July 7 in Troy and July 14 in Burlington, the annual CDT Donor Memorial Services will occur. Dozens of donor family members, representing donors from throughout the CDT service area, will gather at one of the two venues for an evening to honor the memories of loved ones who donated.

Each service is unique, each service is special, because the stories and families of the donors represented are all so unique. Of all the events and functions I annually participate in, these two nights are by far the most moving and meaningful evenings of the year.

As I stand before the room and welcome the assembled families, I cannot help but reflect upon the cumulative loss the faces looking back at

See *Executive Director*, page 3



The Messina family with one of Matthew's recipients, center left and her daughter, center right.





A Donate Life Organization

In The News

IN FEBRUARY, CDT Executive Director Jeffrey Orłowski and PR Specialist Lauren Quinn were interviewed by the Poughkeepsie Journal for an article highlighting the importance of organ donation to the African American community.

DAVID CONTI, M.D., medical director of CDT and the director of transplantation, head of the division of general surgery and professor of surgery at Albany Medical Center, was invited to serve a four-year term on the national Advisory Committee on Organ Transplantation (ACOT). The 25 member committee advises the Secretary of the Department of Health & Human Services on all aspects of organ procurement, allocation and transplantation, including ways to increase deceased and living donation rates nationally. Dr. Conti's term will begin in July 2005.

CDT volunteer Greg Satterlee was profiled in the Caring Community section of the Times Union on May 3, 2005. The story highlighted Greg's efforts to raise awareness for CDT and the importance of organ donation.

KIDNEY recipient Ruth Verbal, her brother and living donor Walter Parker, and Ruth's transplant surgeon David Conti, M.D. were interviewed by Capital News 9 on May 11, 2005.

Scholarship Winners Announced

Congratulations to our two winners of the 2005 Amy Bindelglass Memorial Scholarship. Ellenville High School senior Mariya Gusman won first place in the essay contest, receiving a \$500 scholarship. Mariya will be attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the fall, where she plans

to study physics and biomedical engineering. Sanjna Shah, a junior at Vestal Senior High School, will receive a \$200 scholarship for placing second in the contest. The scholarship applicants wrote a persuasive essay on the ethical implications of solicitation of donor organs by those waiting for a transplant.

New Faces

LEIGH FOSTER joined CDT as an organ procurement coordinator in February 2005. Leigh received his bachelor's degree from Oberlin College and was previously employed as an EMT for Mohawk Ambulance.

Correction

In the winter issue of the Legacy, Fletcher Allen Health Care was omitted from the listing of CDT hospitals participating in the Organ Donation Breakthrough Collaborative.

Organ Donation: Life and Hope, from page 1

As a result of our decision on Matt's behalf we have witnessed first hand the tremendous good that organ transplants accomplish. Matt had not made the choice to give, but we know what he wanted and did that for him. In a very real way Matt's life lives on here on earth because his Gift of Life lives on in others. I can understand how, in such traumatic and heart-breaking circumstances family members faced with this choice may not know what to do, or not want to deal

with the issue. Therefore, please let me strongly encourage everyone to make the time to consider being a donor and to speak with other family members about their wishes. I hope with all my heart that you will never have to give that Gift of Life, or make a decision for a loved one. But early thought about this important matter could be a gift of life and love for your family and other families if that is ever needed.

The Legacy

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Jeffrey Orłowski, M.S., C.P.T.C., Executive Director

Bill McTague, Director of Clinical Operations

Lauren Quinn, Editor

Catherine McTague, Staff

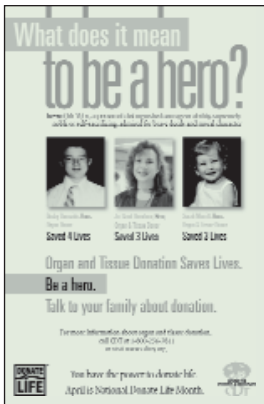
Walter Boppert, Art and Design

**24-Hour Information
(800) 256-7811**

We Want to Hear From You!

If you are a member of an affiliated hospital who would like to advertise an upcoming event or submit an article to the Legacy, contact Lauren Quinn at (800) 256-7811 or via e-mail at lquinn@cdtny.org.

The Legacy is published on a quarterly basis and covers the health care community that CDT serves in northern and eastern New York, and western Vermont.



CDT's poster for Donate Life Month honored the memory of three organ donors.

For other Donate Life Month events please see pages for and five.

Join CDT at the 3rd Annual Ride for Tommy

TOMMY GAILOR was a bright energetic man who shared his family's love of motorcycles. In the summer of 2003 he was looking forward to the arrival of mother's new Harley, excited about the prospect of riding with her. Tragically, Tommy's life was cut short that July due to an accident, but in his passing he was able to give the gift of life to 5 people through organ donation.

In Tommy's honor, his family and friends have organized an annual motorcycle ride that takes place this year on Sunday, July 17, at 10:00 am in Greenwich, New York. Up to 200 motorcycle

riders are expected to join this popular event, whose proceeds will benefit the Center for Donation & Transplant. The ride begins at the Greenwich Elks Club on Route 40 in Greenwich, New York and will leave at 10:00 am and return about 3:00 pm. Riders and non-riders are welcome to attend. Registration will be held there from 8:00 - 10:00 am. The cost to participate is \$20, which includes the ride, picnic buffet and DJ activities. There will also be door and raffle prizes and a silent auction. Join CDT as we "ride for life" in Tommy's honor. For more information, call Tammy Mitchell at (518) 695-5386.

Power of words affect donation

Original article written by the AOPD Donor Family Council

WORDS have the power to hurt and heal; to encourage or create despair; to promote understanding or contribute to misconception. That has never been truer than in dealing with the sensitive subject of organ, eye and tissue donation.

Certain words have been in the donation and transplantation lexicon for years, without much regard for the effect they have on potential donors, and donor families.

Last May, the Donor Family Council of the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations (AOPD) approved the use of new terminology about donation. They reasoned that avoiding words and phrases that cause concern among donor families and the general public will not only increase understanding, but acceptance of the donation process.

Although the word "harvest" has been widely used in the medical community for years, "recover" is a better word that doesn't conjure up visions of crops, crows and combines. "Surgical recovery of organs," is better than "harvesting of organs."

In the past, there was no need to be specific in the use of the word "donor." But as more and more

people choose to be living donors, use of the word "cadaver" or the phrase "cadaveric donation" tends to depersonalize the gift of donation. The Donor Family Council suggests that the use of "deceased donor" and "deceased donation" provide a more positive message to donor families and the general public.

Another sensitive area is the use of the words "life support" when referring to someone on "mechanical or ventilated support." There are two ways of determining death: when the heart stops functioning and when the brain stops functioning. Most organ donors suffer brain death before donation, and are on "mechanical support" when they die. During that time, the donor's organs are perfused with oxygen for several hours, with "mechanical or ventilated support." When death occurs, there is no support that can make the individual live again, and using that terminology can confuse donor families.

Words mean everything when a donor family is dealing with the shock and grief over the death of a loved one, and words may make the critical difference when someone is trying to decide whether or not to become an organ, eye and tissue donor.

CDT to Host Annual Donor Memorials

CDT will host its annual donor memorials during the month of July. The New York memorial will take place on July 7, at the Chapel and Cultural Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. The Vermont memorial will be held on July 14, at St. Michael's College in Colchester, Vermont. Both events will begin at 6:30 pm with a reception following the service. The memorials honor organ and tissue donors that gave the gift of life during the previous year.

For more information, please contact CDT at 1-800-256-7811.

Executive Director, from page 1

me have suffered in the past twelve months. Fathers, mothers, children, siblings, dearest friends...all gone suddenly and usually without warning. In most groups, tragedy is something you have to dig for but in this one, every person knows intimately the meaning of personal tragedy, personal loss and it is palpable in the room.

For all, it has been no more than months and many are still adjusting, will still be adjusting for some time, to the news that a loved one is gone. What an incredible thing it is to realize then that these people, in their time of great loss, have been part of giving life to countless others who they will never know. These people are to me the true definition of heroes...donors and their

families who give the greatest gift of all, the gift of life at a time when that very gift has been wrenched away from them suddenly and without warning.

Who would do something like this? Only one word describes them...HEROES. Could there really be so many? And then the biggest realization of all hits, the one that these people show me every year. We can all be heroes if only we choose to do so.

And so, in the end, as our guests share cookies, punch, and kind words, I am eager to move among them, to hear their stories, to offer a kind word, and to thank them, one-to-one, for being the heroes they are.

CDT's Donate Life Month

CDT Kicked Off Donate Life Month with the Albany River Rats



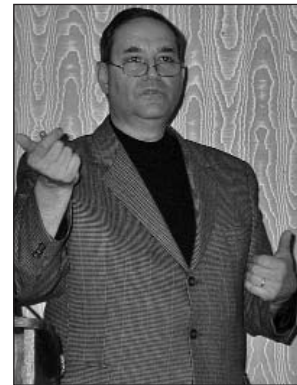
Stephen Smith rides the zamboni at Donate Life night with the Albany River Rats

NATIONAL Donate Life month Celebrations began as CDT teamed up with the Albany River Rats on April 1st to promote the importance of donation at the Rats' game against the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins. That Friday night the Pepsi Arena was filled with CDT staff and volunteers cheering on the team. Throughout the game, the River Rats raised awareness of donation through PA announcements, display tables, commercials and a Donate Life t-shirt toss. In addition, twelve-year-old Stephen Smith and eleven-year-old Michael Countryman, both kidney recipients, rode the zamboni during the intermissions to encourage the audience to join the New York State Organ & Tissue Donor Registry. The game ended with the River Rats' 2-1 victory over the Penguins, and the stadium of Rats' fans encouraged to join the New York State Registry.

CDT Holds Its First Education Day for HealthCare Professionals

CDT'S FIRST ANNUAL Education Day & Awards Dinner was held on April 28 at the Century House in Latham. The educational program was added to the traditional Nurse of the Year dinner to offer CEU credits to the nursing professionals at CDT's hospitals.

The program featured three presenters nationally recognized in their field. Joseph Benevenia, MD, an orthopaedic surgeon and the vice-chairman of orthopaedics at UMD-New Jersey Medical School presented on donated tissue utilization. Dr. Benevenia focused on current medical advances in tissue transplantation that allows for increased uses of donated tissue, faster healing time, and greater success in the performance of transplanted tissue. Francis L. Delmonico, the vice-president/president-elect of the OPTN/UNOS Board of Directors and medical director of the New England Organ Bank, lectured on the medical profession's efforts to alleviate the urgent need for donated organs including the use of extended criteria organs, donation after cardiac death, and paired kidney matching. Dr. Delmonico,



Francis Delmonico, MD, presenting at Education Day

who is also a professor of surgery at Harvard Medical School, spent a great deal of time answering questions from the audience about the future of transplantation. The third speaker was Jack Kress, former executive director of the Advisory Committee on Organ Transplantation, with over 20 years of experience in ethics and 7 years in transplantation ethics. Mr. Kress presented on ethical issues in organ donation and transplantation.

Close to 100 people attended the program, which will be presented every year in conjunction with the appreciation dinner.



Nurses at the RNAC meeting exchanged ideas on promoting donation

CDT Honors Health Care Professionals and Donation Advocates

CDT RECOGNIZED several individuals for their support of organ and tissue donation at its ninth Annual Awards Dinner on April 28, at the Century House in Latham. The dinner is held each year to recognize health care professionals and individuals in the greater community that support CDT's mission and work to increase organ and tissue donation.

Linda Lewis, RN, CCRN, a critical care nurse at Samaritan Hospital in Troy, New York, received the "Nurse of the Year Award." She has been a strong supporter of organ donation throughout her 20-year career as a nursing professional. One of her colleagues wrote in Linda's nomination, "As a student, one of the most valuable and important lessons I was taught was the importance of donation. Linda has a passion and knowledge above and beyond anyone I have met since."



Nurse of the Year Linda Lewis, RN, CCRN, center, with fellow nurses from Samaritan Hospital

In accepting her award, Linda shared with the audience that she had become dedicated to helping families through the donation process after watching a young, newlywed woman consent to the donation of her groom's organs after a tragic accident. She said that the experience made her realize that the ability to give the gift of life offers families hope and peace in the midst of grief and tragedy.

John N. Morley, M.D., vice president of medical affairs and medical director of the Albany Medical Center, was the inaugural recipient of the "Health Care Practitioner of the Year Award." In introducing Dr. Morley, CDT executive director Jeffrey

Orlowski said, "Dr. Morley ensures the cooperation and participation of the many team members needed to facilitate organ donation cases at his hospital, and he encourages all hospital staff to partner with CDT to increase donation. He has done great service to the donor families at

Albany Medical Center, to the hundreds who await transplant in this area, and to the thousands on the list nationwide."

Several individuals were recognized with community service awards, including Richard P. Gaun III, R.M.D.I., local medical examiner coordinator for the state of Vermont, and CDT volunteers John S. Weakley, Jim Carter and Ray Wright. Community service awards are presented to individuals who work outside of the health care profession, but are vital to the success of CDT's mission. When accepting their awards, Carter and Wright both held up photos of the people they felt deserved recognition; Carter's daughter Andrea, who was an organ donor and Wright's liver donor Jeremy.

In addition, Lyn LaBarre, BSN, MS, administrator, emergency services at Albany Medical Center; Karen Sigond, RN, BSN, nurse manager of the medical intensive care unit at Albany Medical Center; and Bill McTague, director of CDT clinical operations were presented the "Executive Director's Award" for their efforts with the "Organ Donation Breakthrough Collaborative."

Almost 200 people attended the award and appreciation dinner. The dinner follows CDT's educational program for nursing professionals.



From left, Joan Wright, Ray Wright, Jim Carter and Sue Carter

Fletcher Allen Receives Medal of Honor for Donation Efforts

FLETCHER ALLEN HEALTH CARE and CDT were awarded a medal of honor from the Department of Health and Human Services for their success in achieving an outstanding 100% conversion rate in organ donation. The hospital and CDT were honored at a celebratory event on May 19, which recognized 183 hospital and OPO teams from across the nation that achieved a 75% or higher annual conversion rate. The event took place at the 1st Annual Organ Donation National Learning Congress in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Abrar Khan, MD, Director of Transplantation and Immunology at Fletcher Allen; CDT Executive Director Jeffrey P. Orlowski; Organ Procurement Coordinator Heidi Pentkowski, RN; and Director of CDT Clinical Operations Bill McTague accepted the medal on behalf of Fletcher Allen Health Care and CDT.

During the period of January 1, 2004 through December 31, 2004, 100% of families who were asked at Fletcher Allen Health Care to donate their loved one's organs agreed. Thanks to their generosity, a total of 41 organs were recovered and transplanted from these donors, benefiting 35 recipients. Historically, the average national conversion rate is 52 to 53 percent.

Dr. Abrar Khan stated, "The selfless decision of the families that chose to give hope and life to others in the midst of their own grief over losing a loved one truly serves as an inspiration to everyone involved in the donation process. I congratulate the staff at Fletcher Allen for their accomplishments, and encourage them to continue their efforts for those still waiting for the gift of life."

"I am delighted that Fletcher Allen Health Care is being recognized for its exemplary achievements in organ donation," said Jeffrey Orlowski. "35 lives were saved through transplantation because of the hard work and dedication of the hospital's staff."

Fletcher Allen Health Care is one of seven hospitals in CDT's region that are participating in the Organ Donation Breakthrough Collaborative. The Collaborative is an initiative set forth by the Department of Health and Human Services that challenges the nation's hospitals with the greatest potential for organ donors to partner with their organ procurement organization in developing policies and procedures designed to achieve an annual conversion rate of 75% or higher.



From left, Bill McTague; Abrar Khan, MD; HRSA Administrator Elizabeth Duke, MD; Jeffrey Orlowski & Heidi Pentkowski accept the Medal of Honor"

New York State Organ and Tissue Donor Registry Passes Million Mark

IN APRIL, Governor George E. Pataki announced that more than one million New Yorkers have enrolled in the New York State Organ and Tissue Donor Registry. The registry was created in June 2000 by Governor Pataki to allow individuals to express their intent to be an organ and tissue donor upon death. It is a confidential database maintained by the New York State Department of Health, and the registry information can only be accessed by federally approved organ donation professionals.

State Department of Motor Vehicles Commissioner Raymond P. Martinez said, "In fewer than five years, Governor Pataki's vision for the State's Organ and Tissue Donor Registry has become a life-giving reality with more than one million compassionate and selfless New Yorkers." Those interested in enrolling in the registry can do so when applying for or renewing their driver's license or non-driver identification card at the DMV, or can register online at www.cdtny.org or call 1-800-256-7811 for a registry card.

Record Number of Transplantations in 2004

IN MARCH, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that over 27,000 organ transplants were performed in 2004, setting a new national record. A total of 27,032 transplants took place in 2004, eclipsing 2003's record of 25,461 organ transplants. "I am heartened that the promise of organ donation continues to save more and more lives every year," HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt said. "For each life saved, hope, for others in need, grows; we must continue to grow and share that hope across the nation."

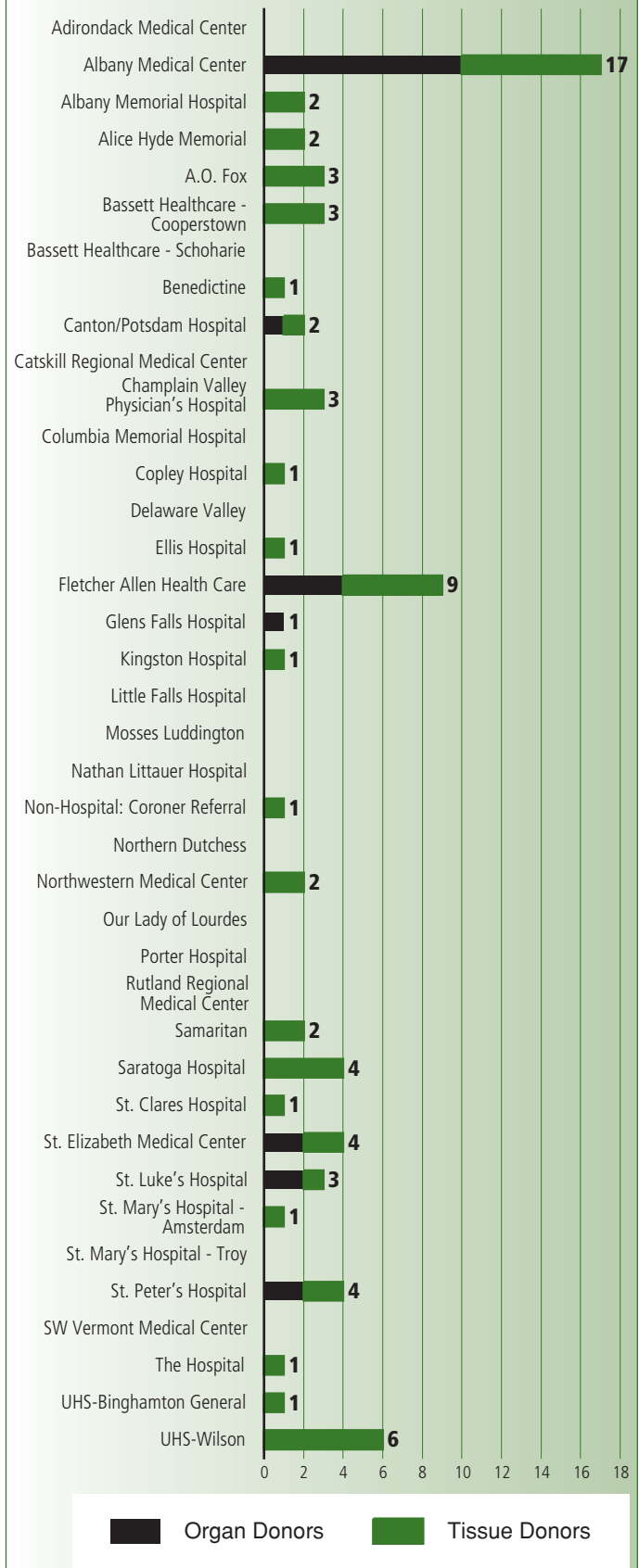
There were over 7,000 deceased donors in 2004; an almost 11% increase over the number of deceased donors in 2003. This is the largest increase in the last ten years, and the second highest annual increase since 1987, the year the government began to record this data. An average of three organs were procured from each deceased donor. Living donation also increased in 2004; with 6,966 living donor transplants performed that year.

According to preliminary data from the Organ Procurement Transplantation Network (OPTN), the two most commonly performed transplantations, kidney and liver, increased significantly in 2004. It is estimated that kidney transplants rose by more than 5% compared to the previous year, and liver transplants increased almost 9%. Jeffrey Orlowski, executive director of CDT said, "It is extremely gratifying to see that, thanks to the commitment and hard work of hospitals and staff, we are saving more lives through transplantation. However, our efforts must continue for those that are still waiting for the gift of life."

Donor Activity by Hospital

January 1 through May 31, 2005

54 total tissue donors, 22 total organ donors





Center for Donation & Transplant
218 Great Oaks Boulevard, Albany, New York 12203
Phone 518 262-5606, Fax 518 262-5427
P2301



Upcoming Events and Important Dates

- July 7New York Donor Memorial, Troy, NY
- July 14Vermont Donor Memorial, Colchester, VT
- July 173rd Annual Ride for Tommy, Greenwich, NY
- July 22 - 24National Donor Recognition Ceremony and Workshop, Washington, DC
- August 1National Minority Awareness Day
- August 5 - 7.....Binghamton SpiedieFest, Binghamton, NY
- August 19Donate Life Night with the Binghamton Mets, Binghamton, NY

**If you have any questions about our upcoming events,
please contact Lauren Quinn at (800) 256-7811.**