

# FOTA TRANSPLANT LIFE QUARTERLY



LATEST NEWS FROM FLORIDA ORGAN TRANSPLANT ASSOCIATION

ISSUE: SUMMER 2020

## A Virtual Gathering Place: Join FOTA's Online Support Group



With all local transplant support groups currently on hold due to social distancing efforts, Cleveland Clinic social worker, Takisha Lee, explained to the FOTA team, that many of her patients were “at home, nervous, bored, and needing to talk with fellow transplant patients.” Thanks to Takisha’s advocacy, we created the FOTA Virtual Support Group.

Formerly called the South Florida Transplant Support Group, John Venezia leads the digital effort. We held our first session on Thursday, May 28th where an intimate group of pre- and post- transplant patients and social workers joined in to talk about things like COVID-19, Transplant Games and general transplant topics. Two sessions later we are starting to really pick up speed. Over 30 transplant community members have participated in an open dialogue to express their ideas and questions about transplantation.

Slated for the last Thursday of the month from 7:00-8:30pm, the FOTA Virtual Support Group is a good gathering place if you have questions surrounding the world of transplant and want to chat with your peers. Pre-transplant patients hear personal experiences from post-transplant patients. Donor Moms share their stories and bring us to tears. Patients share resources with one another and catch up on the latest transplant community happenings. Join us for upcoming sessions: **Thursday, July 30th • Thursday, August 27th • Thursday, September 24th**

Visit [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us) and join the meeting using ID: **915 814 4488**, and Password: **transplant**. If you have any questions, please reach out to John Venezia at [venez40@bellsouth.net](mailto:venez40@bellsouth.net).

## FOTA's 2020 Wild Adventure Run/Walk is Going Virtual

While we could not celebrate National Donate Life Month at Zoo Miami this past April, we cannot let the year go by without banding together in support of the transplant community. So, we are taking this event online and going VIRTUAL!

On your mark. Get set. . .GO to FOTA's website, [www.floridaorgantransplant.org](http://www.floridaorgantransplant.org), to sign up for FOTA's Virtual 2020 Wild Transplant Adventure Fun Run/Walk, from August 15th through August 30th.



How does it work? You can race anywhere (on a treadmill, around your neighborhood or any course of your choice). We will send your race t-shirt and medal, plus you can download a personalized bib, so you've got your transplant swag before and after your race.

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## Executive Director's Message



Dear Friends,

We are halfway through 2020, and what an unprecedented time it has been so far. Who knew when we shouted "Happy New Year" a few short months later we would be met with shelter at home and isolation, masks and PPE, social distancing, and an enormous death toll with over 130,000 American lives lost.

The events of the past few months have brought into focus the vast inequities all around: a pandemic and its economic/health impact; growing gaps in social mobility, health outcomes, and lifespans that defy our nation's ideals of equal opportunity; and the deadly violence that we have now borne witness to—George Floyd's death was wrong, and left us angry, heartbroken and questioning how do we make a change.

FOTA remains steadfast in our commitment to support families who need a helping hand, regardless of race or circumstance, and serve the transplant community at-large. We stand together as one collective heart to build positive change of unity, inclusivity and understanding.

The overall outlook remains one of hope and kindness. Our healthcare heroes continue to work the front lines to take care of our loved ones in need; and the human spirit persists with acts of compassion, large and small.

We strive for connection.  
We choose to make an impact.  
We need one another.

FOTA launched a virtual support group to keep us all connected—transplant recipients, pre-transplant patients, donor families, medical staff, and families. We meet through Zoom on the fourth Thursday of the month from 7:00-8:30pm. If you don't already get our emails, please reach out to me at venez40@bellsouth.net.

As you can imagine, the fall calendar is typically full of community events like the Adam Straub Memorial Golf Tournament, the FOTA Wild Adventure Transplant 5K Run/Walk and the Annual Holiday Celebration of Life. We want to continue these events and help build camaraderie within the transplant community—but with so many of us sitting today immunocompromised, we remain a high-risk of contracting COVID-19. The health and safety of this community is paramount, so we are working on viable options for the golf and holiday events.

While these traditional events are in flux, we are working feverishly to bring these virtual events forward: Build-a-Bear (currently underway); FOTA's Virtual 2020 Wild Transplant Adventure Fun Run/Walk slated to run digitally August 15th through August 30th; and our first-ever Transplant Topics: An Online Forum, scheduled for Saturday, October 3rd.

2020 Definitely looks different than what we planned for, but we are up to the task to serve the South Florida community and make an impact, together.

Stay healthy,

John Venezia  
Executive Director



*is to become a central hub of resources and fellowship for the transplant community*



## FOTA Board of Directors

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## CONNECT WITH US

Florida Organ  
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934 N University Drive, #451  
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## JOIN THE FOTA FAMILY

Whether you are a transplant recipient, living donor, organ donor family, or just beginning your pre-transplant journey, you have a place with us at Florida Organ Transplant Association (FOTA). And the first stop is to join the membership.

By becoming an annual member, you are investing in the mission and supporting transplant families every day. We work tirelessly alongside the social work departments at all South Florida transplant hospitals to offer emergency support and resources to families in need. Membership begins at \$25—please check out which level serves you best:

### \$25: Individual Member

- One (1) complimentary member admission to annual Holiday Celebration of Life.
- Invitations to upcoming FOTA events and seminars.
- Subscription to quarterly newsletter.
- Monthly email with upcoming transplant support group information, and resources for the transplant community.

### \$75: Family Membership (2 Adults and up to 3 Children at the same address)

- Complimentary admission to annual Holiday Celebration of Life for a family of 5 (2 adults and up to 3 children, at the same address).
- Invitations to upcoming FOTA events and seminars.
- Subscription to quarterly newsletter.
- Monthly email with upcoming transplant support group information, and resources for the transplant community.

### \$150: FOTA Professionals

- Complimentary admission to annual Holiday Celebration of Life for a family of 5 (2 adults and up to 3 children, at the same address).
- Invitations to upcoming FOTA events and seminars.
- Subscription to quarterly newsletter.
- Monthly email with upcoming transplant support group information, and resources for the transplant community.
- Listing in the monthly email with your company name and website (if applicable).

### \$250: Celebration of Life Membership

- Complimentary admission to annual Holiday Celebration of Life for a family of 5 (2 adults and up to 3 children, at the same address) with reserved seating.
- Invitations to upcoming FOTA events and seminars.
- Subscription to quarterly newsletter, with company listing and website (if applicable).
- Monthly email with upcoming transplant support group information, and resources for the transplant community.
- Listing in the monthly email with your company name and website (if applicable).
- Recognition in FOTA's online Annual Donor recognition page.

### \$500: The FOTA Society

- The opportunity to restrict your membership specifically toward our mission work of patient services, education or research.
- Complimentary admission to annual Holiday Celebration of Life for a family of 5 (2 adults and up to 3 children, at the same address) with reserved seating.
- Invitations to upcoming FOTA events and seminars.
- Subscription to quarterly newsletter, with company listing and website (if applicable).
- Monthly email with upcoming transplant support group information, and resources for the transplant community.
- Listing in the monthly email with your company name and website (if applicable).
- Recognition in FOTA's online Annual Donor recognition page.

To sign up, please visit [www.floridaorgantransplant.org](http://www.floridaorgantransplant.org)  
or return the enclosed envelope.

## Care Packages to Spread the Love



Amidst PPE shortages, FOTA shipped 250 care packs to all five South Florida transplant hospitals with hand sanitizers, pill organizers, and first aid to help patients and staff. “Even from afar, we want to ensure transplant community has what it needs,” said John Venezia, FOTA Executive Director.

The following month, we sent a box filled to the brim with stuffed animals to be distributed to the pediatric transplant patients at Joe DiMaggio Children’s Hospital. While social distancing remains in effect, these new pals can keep the kiddos company year-round!



## Next Stop: 2021 Transplant Games of America



We are excited to announce that the 2020 Transplant Games will be held in the New Jersey Meadowlands from July 16 - July 21, 2021.

We have all been handed a tremendous opportunity. With this additional time, Team Florida can continue to create excitement, deliver the message that transplantation saves lives, and to remind the community that hope, courage, and tenacity are words that define us.

Team Florida is already boasting a strong turnout with over 112 athletes and nearly 200 participants heading to the Meadowlands. All team members receive swag such as the official 2021 team pin. Check it out!



Registration for the Games is now open once again. Please note that the registration price has increased as of July 18, 2020, reflecting the additional expenses associated with rescheduling the event. Of course, individuals who had already registered will remain registered for the Games in 2021, at the original rates.

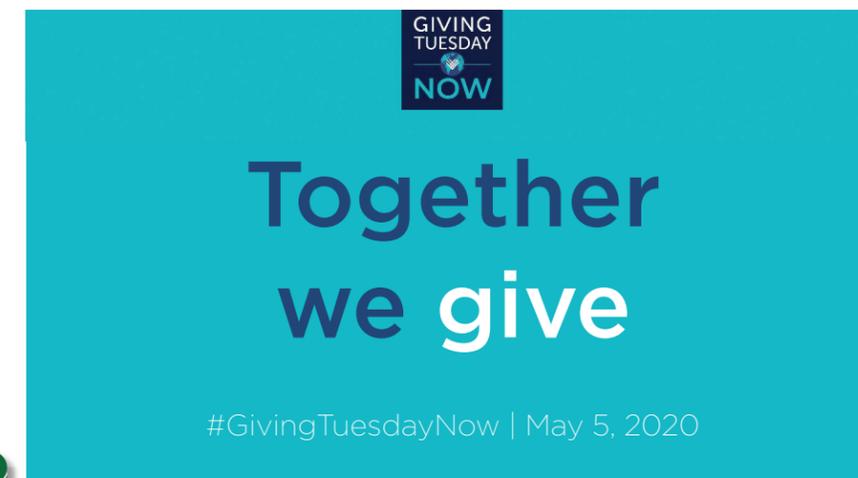
New Increased Rates (July 19, 2020-June 6, 2021)  
\$125.00 Non-Competitor Registration | \$250.00 Competitor Registration

To register and find out more information, please visit the following link: <https://www.transplantgamesofamerica.org/registration.html>

Stay in the know with Team Florida! To be added to the Team Florida listserv, please email: [TeamFloridaTransplantGames@gmail.com](mailto:TeamFloridaTransplantGames@gmail.com). Also, check the Team Florida Facebook page for inspiring stories, team updates and more: <https://www.facebook.com/teamfloridatgagames/>.

Have questions about the Games? Please reach out to Florida’s Team Managers: Josie Flores-Centrella ([josieflores16@gmail.com](mailto:josieflores16@gmail.com)), Adrian Monsalve ([monsalve.adrian@gmail.com](mailto:monsalve.adrian@gmail.com)) and Denise Simpson ([denisesimpsonTM@gmail.com](mailto:denisesimpsonTM@gmail.com)).

## #GivingTuesday THANKS



On May 5th FOTA was one of hundreds of charities in South Florida and thousands of charities around the world to come together in a “global day of unity”. In just 24 hours, you helped to raise \$971 for direct support to the transplant community.

A special shout-out to the following supporters:

Mirta & Gilbert Chediak  
Gwen Jefferson  
Vivian Lerner & Mariella  
Brandon  
Louis Levin

Luke Lukomski  
Sharon MacFarlane  
Owen McClave  
Tibhawan Persaud  
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Phyllis & Scott Shamis  
Randi Swersky  
Melissa & David Wetzel  
Robin Williams



## Bring Back the Bump

Did you know that during a friendly handshake we transfer approximately 124 million microbes—and the firmer your handshake the more transfer takes place! A high-five is two times cleaner than a handshake, but the mighty fist bump is **20 TIMES** cleaner.

*Let’s bring back the fist bump in the name of good health!*

## FOTA's 2020 Wild Adventure Run/Walk is Going Virtual



And this virtual event comes with a special challenge: our goal is to walk/run 2,400 miles together! 24-Hours a day, every day, fellow Floridians are added to the transplant waiting list. Let's race together to raise \$24,000 and log 2,400 miles in solidarity of our transplant brothers and sisters.

Once you're registered you can easily input your mileage and help us reach our goal! We've got two weeks, from August 15th to August 30th, to race together, spread the word on the importance of organ donation, and make a difference to transplant/donor patients right here in South Florida.

Registration is \$35...or FREE! Participants can fundraise for special prizes, and if you raise \$100 in support from friends/family, we automatically refund your registration and you walk/run for FREE!

More prizes? Yes, please! Whether you register or make a donation of \$25 or more, you will be entered into a weekly raffle to win prizes like specialty baskets, wine tastings, massages and more. We will start these weekly drawings on Facebook Live every Wednesday at 6pm beginning on Wednesday, July 29th!

While 2020 is the year of social distancing, we can stay connected online through FOTA's Facebook page and using hashtag, #FOTAruns. Let's get active and social together, so lace up your sneakers and join the movement!



Laura with families at 2019 Build-a-Bear event

## KIDS NEEDING KIDNEYS VIRTUAL BUILD-A-BEAR

By: Laura Kowalczyk

FOTA and Kids Needing Kidneys postponed the 13th Annual Build-A-Bear event this past spring due to the pandemic. While we usually bring 70+ families to the Build-a-Bear location at Pembroke Lakes Mall in Pembroke Pines, we needed to get creative to disburse these custom friendly creations throughout Miami-Dade and Broward pediatric dialysis locations.

We have now put into motion a virtual alternative for all the children on dialysis at the three South Florida children's hospitals: Holtz Children's Hospital, Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital, and Nicklaus Children's Hospital. Social workers and dialysis technicians are going to each patient with pictures of the stuffed animals they can choose from.

Patients will pick out an outfit and shoes and will be given a blank birth certificate to fill out. When all the children's orders are complete, the Pembroke Lakes location store employees will make each new friend customized to the specifications of each patient. These new furry friends will be picked up from the store by volunteers and delivered directly the children during their treatment.

While we miss the excitement and energy of being together at the store to pick out these treasures, I feel blessed that we can continue the tradition this year, albeit it virtually. I cannot wait to see you all in 2021!



## EVENTS CORNER



### Transplant Topics: An Online Forum

Saturday, October 3rd, 2020 • 9:00am-12:00pm • Zoom Platform

Join FOTA and the South Florida transplant community of medical staff, patients, living donors, and transplant/donor families who want to learn the latest advancements in transplantation. There will be several different sessions offered like "Transplantation in the age of COVID" and "Living donation chain" and "Diets pre- and post-Transplant". There is a limit of 100 attendees per session. It is free to attend, and donations are welcome. Please stay tuned for more details.

## UPCOMING CALENDAR

JULY	'20	Build-a-Bear Summer Event
JULY	26	NKFF Miami Kidney Walk
AUG.	15-30	FOTA's Virtual 2020 Wild Transplant Adventure Fun Run/Walk
OCT.	3	Transplant Topics: An Online Forum



**FLORIDA ORGAN TRANSPLANT ASSOCIATION**  
Helping Organ Donor and Transplant Families

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# Join over 11 Million Floridians to give the Gift of Life

A single organ/tissue donor can save the lives of more than 50 people. For more information and to sign up, please visit [www.donatelifeflorida.org](http://www.donatelifeflorida.org).

While a signed donor card and a driver's license with an "organ donor" designation are legal documents, your family will ultimately give consent when the time has come. It is important to share your decision to donate life with your family. Once you've made the decision to become an organ/tissue donor, please share this card with your family and start the conversation today!



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (next of kin)

I have made the important decision to sign up to become an organ/tissue donor. Although I have \_\_\_\_\_ signed an organ donor card and/or \_\_\_\_\_ signed up through my state's registry, and it's legally binding, the medical team may ask your for permission at the time of my passing to proceed with this gift. Please honor my wishes and allow me the chance to make a difference in up to 50 lives by becoming an organ tissue/ donor.

\_\_\_\_ I signed up to donate everything I can

\_\_\_\_ I signed up with donation limitations that include \_\_\_\_\_

Let's talk! With love, \_\_\_\_\_

(donor signature)



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f /florgantransplant.org t floridaorgantra