



FOTA TRANSPLANT LIFE QUARTERLY



LATEST NEWS FROM FLORIDA ORGAN TRANSPLANT ASSOCIATION

ISSUE: **SUMMER 2022**



FOTA Celebrates 20 Years of Transplant Service at Run/Walk

Florida Organ Transplant Association (FOTA) celebrated 20 years of serving the transplant community on May 16th. As part of the festivities, we held our 5th Annual Hybrid Wild Adventure Fun Run/Walk at Zoo Miami on Saturday, April 23rd where over 150 participants enjoyed the park and were among the first to see the updated 20-year FOTA logo, presented by the FOTA Board of Directors.

Global Reach Miracle Foundation representatives James Talamas, Ira Stern and Niurka Aleman were in attendance to award FOTA a check for \$24,526.25—their commitment to emergency transplant patient grants program. “The Global Reach Miracle Foundation team have shown their passion for transplant from day one,” said John Venezia, FOTA Executive Director. “Both organizations have kept the focus on the patient experience throughout the pandemic, and we are grateful to Global Reach Miracle Foundation for making this commitment.”

In addition to the ceremony, participants enjoyed the musical stylings of DJ 305, photo booth, lawn games, raffle, auction, food, drinks, and special guests, Juanita the Flamingo and the Chick-fil-A cows. The merriment was in full force as participants wrapped up the event and headed over to Zoo Miami to enjoy the park all day long (a benefit included in their event registration).

This event could not have been possible without a few groups, beginning with our sponsors: Global Reach Miracle Foundation, CareDx, Memorial Transplant Institute, South Florida Small Business Accounting, Veloxis Pharmaceuticals, Straub Family, Wetzel & Associates, Kidney Beans (Team) and Lawton Properties. Next a nod of thanks to our partners: Chick-fil-a South Florida, Einstein Bros Bagels, Kennesaw Juice and Life Alliance Organ Recovery Organization. Last, but certainly not least, to all of our participants and volunteers—you make the event come to life!

For photos of the event, please visit <https://www.facebook.com/florgantransplant.org>.



Kiddos getting silly with Chick-Fil-A mascots



Transplant recipient dad, Gilbert Chediak, kicks off the race with Juanita the flamingo



Global Reach Miracle Foundation representatives Ira Stern, James Talamas and Niurka Aleman (center) with FOTA Board of Directors

Executive Director's Message

Dear Friends,

To be young, healthy and thriving—**of course, I'm describing FOTA as we celebrated 20 years of transplant service on May 16th.** We are here today, thanks to the vision of our founder, Dale Gilbert, who understood first-hand the plight of the transplant patient and family, not just through the transplant surgery itself, but afterward. We are not the same as transplant puts us on a new path, a renewed life.

In the early years we focused on networking and bringing families together through Marina Day, Tiger Bowl and Transplant Games fundraisers. Over time, we expanded our events calendar, made the leap to start offering financial grants to families through our social work partners, and the rest is history

In just 2021 alone, we granted nearly \$40,000 and provided services to 401 families. COVID turned out to be an interesting trick for us as our funding dropped by 52% in 2020 and our grants increased by over 114%. COVID tested our mettle as an organization. Thanks to you, our FOTA family, we never wavered. Every grant request was approved, as the FOTA Board of Directors continues to prioritize transplant families.

So here we are, 20 years later, and as folks slowly but surely get back to "normal" life, we are looking forward to **seeing you all in person at Marina Day on July 16th (for pediatric transplant families) and at our Annual Celebration of Life Holiday Luncheon on December 3rd at Signature Grand.** In between there are monthly virtual support groups, and quarterly Transplant Topics.

If you aren't already a member, consider joining us. If you are so inspired, consider making a tax-deductible gift. Do you want to volunteer for an event, or join the Board of Directors? **We are volunteer-run and always looking for folks to contribute time, talent and treasure.**

Here's to the next 20 years!

Be well,



John Venezia
Executive Director



FOTA Board of Directors

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Lissette Linares
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THANK YOU to all of our recent new/renewed members as of May 31st

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Roberto Agüero | Vivian Lerner | Betty Ann Straub-Ruotolo |
| Mark Barber | Louis Levin | Irene and Alfred Vulpis |
| James and Ann Birr | Ziomahara Linares | Marcy Weinberg |
| Valbona Bushi | Luke Lukomski | Melissa and David Wetzal |
| Louis Cascado | Owen McClave | Susan and Rick Wodnicki |
| Gilbert Chediak | Mike and Michelle McLaughlin | |
| Mirta and Gilbert Chediak | Barbara Pippinger | |
| Foley Family | June Ranofsky | |
| Stephanie Fazekas | Susan Reyes | |
| Mindy Gross | Jose Romero | |
| Ziomahara Infante | Liz Ruotolo | |
| Jessica Jones | Gilda Saul | |
| Daniel Kelly | Sharon Schwabenbauer | |
| Anthony Krzeminski | Charles & Sandra Simon | |
| Michael Landes | Charitable Fund | |
| James R. Lawton | Adrienne Steiner | |

To join the FOTA Family:



Scan Here

Now is a great time to consider joining the FOTA Family!

When you become a member, you stand in solidarity with the nearly 5,000 Floridians awaiting a lifesaving transplant and the thousands who have survived transplant and need help along the way.

Annual membership provides the ongoing support to keep patient programs and activities running in earnest.



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

Patient Services Update

So far in 2022, FOTA has awarded 25 grants to transplant patients and families facing financial hardship. Our flagship program, the Emergency Grant Support Program, provides one-time financial hardship support for transplant families in need. We work with the social work teams of all South Florida transplant hospitals to qualify the need and submit a short request toward basic necessities like housing, food, medications and transportation.

The average grant size is currently \$464. Recently, the Leading Ladies organization, recognized FOTA's efforts and provided a \$5,000 grant toward this program. Many thanks to the Leading Ladies for your tireless support of the transplant community!

If you would like to join the Leading Ladies, and make a gift to support our mission, please scan the QR Code.



Scan Here To join



FOTA Members Featured in Kidney Transplant Conversations Podcast



When we invited Veloxis Pharmaceuticals to speak at Transplant Topics last fall, they used the platform to connect our FOTA community to Rolf Taylor, who produces Kidney Transplant Conversations—a podcast that features diverse voices and experiences of donating, receiving, and caring for this gift of life.

Amidst our in-depth discussions throughout Transplant Topics, Rolf polled FOTA members on topics of interest, and both supporting transplant patients pre and post, mental health of recipients and caregivers, and living in a COVID world as a recipients prevailed and hot button issues. Rolf and his advisory committee got to work and Episode 9, published May 24th, is the culmination of this experience.

Check out FOTA Executive Director, John Venezia, and FOTA members Barbara Pippinger and Ed Delz at <https://kidneytransplant.podbean.com/> (or wherever you listen to podcasts). And a nod of thanks to Rolf Taylor, Kidney Transplant Conversations team, and the folks at Veloxis Pharmaceuticals.

UPCOMING CALENDAR

JULY	16	Marina Day
JULY	28	FOTA Monthly Virtual Support Group
AUG	JULY 29 / 3	2022 Donate Life Transplant Games
SEPT.		Transplant Topics: An Online Forum
SEPT.	29	FOTA Monthly Virtual Support Group

A Virtual Gathering Place: FOTA's Online Support Group Turns Two

When Cleveland Clinic social worker, Takisha Lee, called the FOTA team in April 2020 to share that many of her patients were "at home, nervous, bored, and needing to talk with fellow transplant patients," FOTA's Executive Director, John Venezia, jumped to action to establish the monthly FOTA Virtual Support Group.

Formerly called the South Florida Transplant Support Group, John leads the digital effort. Support group is held the fourth Thursday of the month between 7:00-8:30pm and 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. The support group is an open forum, so no two sessions are the same.

This past May as the virtual support group turned two, its godmother Takisha Lee was in attendance and fielding questions from attendees. Thanks again to Takisha for her advocacy in 2020, and for her recent guest speaking role. For more details, check out our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/florgantransplant.org or email John Venezia at venez40@bellsouth.net.



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.

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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