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25 Story Ideas

LifeGift will be celebrating its silver anniversary in 2012. Throughout its 25-year-history, LifeGift has helped restore health, hope and healing to thousands through organ and tissue donation. Below are potential story ideas LifeGift would love to explore and/or discuss with you.

1. Dr. Denton Cooley performed the first successful human heart transplant in 1968 at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital. What were transplants like back then in terms of life expectancy? What was the process for obtaining donor organs?
2. Throughout the last 25 years, there have been numerous advances in donation and transplantation. How has LifeGift, the local organ procurement organization (OPO), contributed to these advancements? One example is the creation of the in-house coordinator, a professional who works exclusively within an assigned donor hospital and collaborates with the hospital's nurses, physicians and residents to identify potential donors, interacts with donor families and assists organ procurement coordinators in donor management. The program was piloted by LifeGift and became a model for other OPOs throughout the country to follow.
3. LifeGift has fueled job growth in Houston, Lubbock and Fort Worth offering highly-specialized jobs to those in the health care sector. One of these jobs is the role of the family care specialist, who consults with grieving family members at the time of donation. What is this job like day in and day out? What other niche positions need to be filled at any OPO? What kind of training does an OPO professional need?
4. Six employees at LifeGift have been with the organization for more than 20 years. Each of them provides a unique perspective on the evolution of LifeGift and the industry as a whole. In a time when staying with one company for more than five years, yet alone nearly 25 is unheard of, what drives these individuals to stay with LifeGift? What is so satisfying about their jobs that they have devoted the majority of their careers to this company? What did they do before LifeGift? How have the company and the industry changed from their unique viewpoints?
5. LifeGift does not operate in a vacuum. It relies heavily on its hospital partners to make donation happen. Who are LifeGift's primary partners and how do they work hand-in-hand to save and enhance lives through organ and tissue donation?
6. Throughout its illustrious 25-year history, LifeGift has touched the lives of several notable people, including:



- Mario Gallegos, State Senator
- Charlie Wilson, Texas Politician
- Raul Velasco, Hispanic Entertainer
- Carson Palmer, professional football player

How did LifeGift touch these people and how were their families lives changed forever because of donation?

7. LifeGift volunteers include several organ transplant recipients who are celebrating 20-plus years post-transplant. What are they doing today? What have they been able to accomplish since they received their transplants? What advice do they give those waiting for a second chance at life?
8. The LifeGift Vital Volunteer program is an opportunity for members of donor families, transplant recipients and those waiting on a lifesaving transplant to promote organ and tissue donation in their local communities. The Vital Volunteer program was founded in 1990 and continues to grow. What is a Vital Volunteer? How does someone become involved? Who are some of LifeGift's star volunteers?
9. The hub of LifeGift is the Donor Resource Center (DRC), a 24/7 resource for organ and tissue donation. Created in 1995 as the Communications Center, the DRC is the front line of the organization and receives organ and tissue donation referral calls from hospitals throughout LifeGift's service area. The DRC also speaks to families about tissue donation and obtains consent. What types of training do these call specialists need? What is it like to take calls from grieving family members?
10. In 1990, LifeGift created the Regalo de Vida program, an outreach program to reach Hispanics. Today, Hispanics make up more than half of the transplant waiting list in Texas. What accounts for this? What is being done to encourage more Hispanics to register as organ and tissue donors?
11. There are many myths about organ and tissue donation, particularly among multicultural populations. What are these myths and how can they be debunked?
12. Weather-related disasters, such as Tropical Storm Allison and Hurricane Ike, did not stop LifeGift from saving lives. How did these two massive storms impact donation? How did LifeGift staff hunker down and overcome these odds? How does LifeGift prepare for these types of weather-related emergencies?
13. In 2006, LifeGift recovered a liver from the oldest donor on record. North Texas Carlton Blackburn was 92 years old, seven days shy of his 93rd birthday, when he donated his liver. How is his recipient doing today? What has she been able to do since her transplant? How old is "too old" to be an organ donor?
14. A lot of attention is given to organ donation, but far less is paid to tissue donation. Tissue donation improves the lives of thousands each year through the donation of



skin, cartilage, bone, tendon and eyes. Who needs tissue donation? What is the tissue donation process? Why is tissue donation important?

15. Samuel M. Holtzman was selected as president and CEO of LifeGift in 1997. Under his leadership, LifeGift has become one of the most successful organ procurement organizations in the country. What makes Sam tick? What keeps him up at night? What are the secrets to his success?
16. In 2006, the Glenda P. Dawson Donate Life Texas Registry was officially created. It gave Texans the opportunity to say “yes” to donation. As the official database of those Texans wishing to be organ and tissue donors upon their deaths, the registry takes the burden off of families to make a decision about donation at such a difficult time. How does the registry work? Do Texans know about it? What is LifeGift’s connection to the registry?
17. There are three ways to register as an organ and tissue donors. Do Texans know about these three ways or is there still a lot of confusion out there? How does someone know if they are, in fact, registered?
18. In 2005, LifeGift purchased a 28,000-square-foot building, which would eventually house the company’s state-of-the-art facilities, including rooms for tissue recovery to take place onsite. What was the thinking behind this facility? What are the plans for future enhancements? What is the advantage of recovering tissue onsite?
19. Over its 25-year-history, LifeGift has grown into one of the most successful organ procurement organizations across the country. What does the future hold for LifeGift? What does the future hold for the OPO industry? Will the supply for transplantable organs ever outweigh the demand?
20. Most organized religions see organ and tissue donation as a final act of charity. What are some specific viewpoints of the different denominations? What is the best way to reach clergy about this important topic? Are there any religions that argue against organ and tissue donation?
21. In 2011, the executive leadership from the state’s three organ procurement organizations (LifeGift, Southwest Transplant Alliance and Texas Organ Sharing) made a significant step for people waiting on lifesaving transplants. The three OPOs worked together on a piece of Texas legislation that would take maintenance and operation of the registry away from the Department of State Health Services. Why was this move so important? What did it take to get there? What do the OPOs expect as a result?
22. Organ and tissue donation does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex or age. Across the country, 113,000 men, women and children await a lifesaving transplant. How many of these are children? Are there differences between what a child needs in terms of an organ and what an adult needs?
23. Donation can provide comfort to a grieving family facing tragic circumstances. Donor families often say their loved ones left a legacy or live on through the lives of others.



How do donor families cope? How do they make the decision to donate? What is the experience like for a donor family?

24. In 1994, LifeGift established its Donor Family Services After Care Program. This program provides hope and healing for donor families after their loved one has donated organs and/or tissue. What types of aftercare does LifeGift provide? How do the donor families feel about it? How is it helpful to them?
25. Nearly 11,000 men, women and children across Texas are waiting for a second chance at life and the number continues to grow. What accounts for the great demand? What is it like wait? What are some options while waiting for transplants? How do patients and their families cope?

About LifeGift

LifeGift is a not-for-profit organ procurement organization (OPO) dedicated to recovering organs and tissue for individuals needing transplants in 109 counties in North, Southeast and West Texas. Originally established in 1987 as Gulf Coast Organ Independent Procurement Organization and later renamed, LifeGift is celebrating 25 years of saving and enhancing lives. It is one of the three OPOs in the state that operates and maintains the Donate Life Texas Registry. For more information about LifeGift, visit www.lifegift.org. For more information about Donate Life Texas, visit www.donatelifetexas.org.

