

Celebrating 25 Years

1968-1986 Pre-LifeGift

Transplants began at Houston-area hospitals. Dr. Denton Cooley performed the first successful human heart transplant in 1968 at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital and the first kidney transplant was performed at Hermann Hospital and Texas Children's Hospital in May 1977. During this time, organ recovery was not the organized system it is today. The major transplant hospitals, Hermann Hospital, The Methodist Hospital, St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital and Texas Children's Hospital, sent surgeons and nurses from their own institutions to recover organs. Many times, the donors were transported from the donor hospital to the transplanting hospital, a drastic departure from today's practice with LifeGift coordinating and traveling to all of its affiliated 209 hospitals for organ and tissue recovery.



Dr. Denton Cooley

1987

LifeGift is established on Aug. 18, under the original name Gulf Coast Independent Organ Procurement Organization (GCIPOO).



1988

The Southeast Region completes its first tissue recovery.

1989

GCIPOO officially changes its name to LifeGift Organ Donation Center.



The West Texas OPO, a hospital-based OPO (University Medical Center) formerly known as the Center for Organ Retrieval, merges with LifeGift, adding 67 counties and 60 hospitals from Lubbock, Amarillo and surrounding areas.

1990

LifeGift's volunteer program begins. LifeGift holds its first Donor Family Memorial Service.



The North Texas OPO in Fort Worth, a hospital-based OPO (Harris Methodist Hospital) known as Tarrant County Organ Donor Program, merges and joins with LifeGift, adding a total of nine counties, including Tarrant County, and 30 hospitals to LifeGift's service area.

LifeGift receives its first government public health service grant – a pioneering donor referral study.

1991

1994

LifeGift's Donor Family Bereavement Program (now Donor Family Services) is established.

Texas House Bill 271 becomes law, protecting the right of individuals by allowing them to make their own decision about organ donation. The new law "is a step forward for organ donation and for patients' rights," according to Teresa Shafer, LifeGift regional director.



FORT WORTH – 1991, North Region Advisory Board Members include (left to right): Chaplain Hubert Moss; Senator Mike Moncrief; LifeGift's Teresa Shafer; Dr. Charles E. Andrews; and County Commissioner J.D. Johnson.

1995

Texas legislature passes one of the nation's first medical examiner laws (sponsored by State Senator Mike Moncrief from Fort Worth) preventing medical examiners and justices of the peace from needlessly denying organ donation from cases falling under control of medical examiners.

LifeGift opens its 24-hour, state-of-the-art Communications Center in Houston to field referrals and inquiries about donation.

LifeGift appoints four full-time, in-house coordinators (IHC) to work at Hermann Hospital and Ben Taub General Hospital in Houston, Texas.

1996

LifeGift celebrates a decade of serving Texans in need of lifesaving organ transplants.

Samuel M. Holtzman is selected as president and CEO of LifeGift.

First life is saved due to the Texas medical examiner law when a medical examiner's denial of organ recovery from a pediatric donor is prevented and 6-month-old Peter Griffith from Lubbock receives a lifesaving liver transplant in Houston, prompting some to call Texas Health & Safety Code, 693, "Peter's Law."

Routine notification is implemented. Hospitals within LifeGift's service area now notify the OPO of all deaths, resulting in significant increases in organ and tissue donation.

1997

1998

LifeGift partners with the United States Postal Service to unveil a new organ donation commemorative postage stamp in its three regions.



Senator Mike Moncrief of Fort Worth and Representative Dianne Delisi of Temple lead the effort that makes it easier for Texans to use their driver's licenses to indicate their wishes to be donors. The red and white DONOR sticker is made available at Department of Public Safety offices across the state.

The Regalo De Vida program is established at LifeGift, coordinating outreach efforts to raise awareness of organ and tissue donation among the Hispanic community.

1999

2000

2001

2003

2004

2005

United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) awards LifeGift two three-year grants. One grant supports the establishment of the In-House Coordinator Program in Level 1 Trauma Centers. The other grant allows LifeGift to create the African-American Clergy Outreach Program.

Tropical Storm Allison submerges Houston, including the Texas Medical Center, in 33 inches of rain. The LifeGift tissue recovery team braves the elements to safely transport lifesaving and life-enhancing tissue during the storm.

LifeGift joins the State of Texas in unveiling a new license plate promoting organ donation during April's National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week.



LUBBOCK – 2000, Anne Griffith, mother of liver recipient Peter Griffith, and Reg Green, father of donor Nicholas Green, share their experiences at the LifeGift Medical Symposium.

LifeGift Chief Operating Officer Teresa Shafer is named national co-chair of the Department of Health and Human Services U.S. Organ Donation Breakthrough Collaborative, which focuses on increasing donation in 300 U.S. hospitals with the greatest organ donor potential.

LifeGift begins its Emergency Medical Services Referral Program, collaborating with emergency medical units to call in tissue referrals from the scenes of accidents.



Nearly 200 runners and walkers attend LifeGift's inaugural 2nd Chance Run, promoting organ and tissue donation awareness in Fort Worth.



LifeGift's West Texas Region obtains more space for tissue recovery in the Lubbock County Medical Examiner's Office for expanded operations. Tissue recovery in the West Region increases 48 percent in the following year.



LifeGift purchases a building, which eventually will house the company's contemporary 28,000-square-foot facilities, including rooms for tissue recovery to take place onsite.



HOUSTON – 2005, Transplant pioneer Dr. Michael E. DeBakey, third from left, visits with staff members at the LifeGift Communications Center. At far right is Dr. George P. Noon, heart surgeon and LifeGift board member.

HOUSTON – 2004, Star of "Cheaper By The Dozen," teen actress and singer Hilary Duff, center, visits with double-lung and liver recipient Chase McGowen, right, and Dr. George Mallory, director of the lung transplantation program at Texas Children's Hospital. Photo courtesy of Paul Kuntz, Texas Children's Hospital.

2006

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

The Glenda P. Dawson Donate Life Texas Registry is officially launched.



The U.S. Organ Donation Breakthrough Collaborative finishes its first three years with a 24.5 percent increase in U.S. organ donors, the largest increase in donors in decades.

The nation's oldest organ donor on record is recovered by LifeGift. North Texan Carlton Blackburn was 92 years of age, seven days short of his 93rd birthday.



LifeGift recovers the state's first registry organ donor, in Fort Worth, under the new Glenda P. Dawson Donate Life Texas Registry.

Hurricane Ike, the third-costliest hurricane ever to make landfall in the United States, slams the Gulf Coast and devastates parts of Houston. LifeGift staff hunkers down in Texas Medical Center hospitals and hotels and recovers a donor during the hurricane and its aftermath, saving five lives.



HOUSTON – 2008, LifeGift opens its doors at 2510 Westridge in Houston, a new home that has state-of-the-art operating room facilities and office space for LifeGift's largest operations located in Houston.

FORT WORTH – 2009, Donor parents Mike and Berni Elder help raise the Donate Life flag, which flies during Donate Life Month and is raised every time someone donates or receives an organ transplant at Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital Fort Worth. Also shown are LifeGift's Ron Ehrle and Texas Health Fort Worth's Terry Akin.

LifeGift plays a key role in crafting legislation that simplifies the process of enrolling in the Donate Life Texas Registry by eliminating a lengthy validation step when Texans register online. The legislation also expands the list of people who can consent to donation and reinforces a person's decision through first-person authorization.



The Glenda P. Dawson Donate Life Texas Registry reaches a milestone: More than 1 million Texans registered their decision to become organ and tissue donors upon their deaths.



LifeGift's Communications Center is renamed the Donor Resource Center.

Governor Rick Perry signs House Bill 2904, giving the three OPOs in Texas ownership and maintenance of the Donate Life Texas Registry. All three OPOs expect to see a large increase in the number of Texans registering to become organ, eye and tissue donors.

LifeGift is awarded the Golden Hour Glass Award by the Musculoskeletal Transplant Foundation in recognition of excellence.

