



**Transplant Recipient International Organization  
Pittsburgh Chapter  
April 2012 Newsletter**

**TRIO CELEBRATION OF LIFE DINNER**

On April 18, 2012, the annual Celebration of Life Dinner was held at the University Club. It was also a celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of TRIO. This year's honorees were Dr. Thomas E. Starzl and the late Brian Reames. The Master of Ceremonies was Sally Wiggin from WTAE TV News. I think it was probably the best Celebration of Life Dinner TRIO has had. Even better than the dinner with Rocky Blier as the guest speaker, and that dinner was hard to beat. Mary Alice King, the current TRIO-Pittsburgh President, kicked off the evening with a warm, welcoming speech followed by Tom Wilson's gracious invocation, which covered all the bases, including all the guests, from the surgeons, recipients, living donors, donor families, friends and family members to the food prepared by the chef and delivered by the servers.

After a delicious meal, Dr. Abhinav Humar, clinical director of the Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute and Chief of the Division of Transplantation in the Department of Surgery at UPMC, gave an eloquent and at times humorous, introductory speech to Dr. Starzl. As Dr. Starzl approached the podium to a standing ovation, Dr. Humar warmly hugged him. Dr. Starzl's comments were sincere and from the heart. There may even have been a tear or two shed in the audience. Dr. Starzl ended with a humorous but honest comment of, "This dinner was one of the best I have had in a while. My compliments to the chef."

Sally Wiggin introduced Mary Reames as the next speaker. Mary is the wife of the late Brian Reames, TRIO's first president. Brian was the fifth heart recipient at Presbyterian Hospital on May 18, 1981. The year, 1981, was also the year that Dr. Starzl began working at the University of Pittsburgh Health Science Center, now known as the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center or simply UPMC. Brian Reames saw a need for a support system for transplant recipients. Brian, along with other transplant recipients and family members formed a support group, which initially was called TRIP – Transplant Recipients In Pittsburgh. In an effort to educate the public in regards to donor awareness, Brian often spoke on local TV stations as well as nationally syndicated shows such as Night Line, the Phil Donohue Show and CBS News. With the support of the Junior League of Pittsburgh, in 1987 TRIO went national. Today TRIO is headquartered in Washington, D.C. with 13 national chapters, including TRIO-Pittsburgh and 3 international chapters. As Mary looked around the room at the beautiful dining room filled with over 160 guests, she remarked how proud Brian would have been to see that TRIO is still in existence and still making a difference. And again, a tear or two may have been shed.

Following Mary was the drawing of raffle tickets for 36 baskets valued between \$100 to \$200 along with 3 door prizes. There were many smiles and much excitement from the guests sitting at a table when one someone at their table announced they held a winning ticket. The excitement continued when Sally provided us with updates of the Penguins vs. Flyers score in game three of the playoff series. In this game, the Pens won 10 – 3.

As people departed the University Club that evening, most were wearing a smile and felt good inside. For they just witnessed and were part of a very memorable and inspiring event. It made me feel proud to be a member of TRIO.

Barb Hepner took the following pictures of the Celebration of Life Dinner:



TRIO-Pittsburgh President, Mary Alice King calls Dr. Starzl up to the podium after Dr. Abhinav Humar's introductory speech, to a standing ovation of all guests.



Dr. Thomas E. Starzl



Mary Reames, wife of the late Brian Reames



Master of Ceremonies, Sally Wiggin



Mary Reames, Sally Wiggin and Dr. Starzl



Athena Sarris, Joy & Dr. Starzl



From Family House: Christie Knott, Executive Director, Joel Ettinger, Founder of Family House & Glen Feinberg, Board of Directors Chairman



Joel Ettinger lovingly gives Dr. Starzl a “wet one”



Dr. Kusum Tom, Mary Alice King and  
2009 Honoree, Dr. Ngoc Thai



Mary Reames holding a ceramic tile with the TRIO symbol

TRIO's symbol is the Tree of Life (a registered trademark). With its intertwining branches, it represents the intertwining of the lives of two human beings, the donor and the recipient, through the Gift of Life. Green, the color of growth and new life, was chosen for the tree to reinforce the new beginning transplantation gives to the recipient.

If you would like to view more pictures taken by Barb Hepner, go to:  
<https://picasaweb.google.com/BarbaraHepner/TRIO25thAnniversary2012?feat=email>

Below are comments from Joann Cantrell, a freelance writer whose work is frequently published in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and other publications. Joanne was a guest at the Celebration of Life Dinner.

*When the city of Pittsburgh hosted the U.S. Transplant Games in 2008, I wrote an article about organ donor awareness and connected with a few transplant recipients. In getting to know some of the people, I quickly became aware that each individual was a vivid testimony to the overall success of transplantation programs. The Transplant Games made me think about the difficult decisions that donor families have to make during a time of personal tragedy. I could not stop wondering about the anonymous loved ones who were faced with making quick decisions while under stress, turning their time of sorrow into the ultimate act of generosity for a complete stranger.*

*This year, I wrote another feature for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette focusing on April being National Donate Life Month. It is a time when people across the country make a special effort to address the needs and celebrate the selflessness of organ, tissue, marrow, blood and cornea donations to save lives.*

*Through the people I interviewed, I was introduced to TRIO – Pittsburgh (the Pittsburgh Chapter of Transplant Recipients International Organization) and I was invited to attend the Celebration of Life Dinner on April 18. The dinner honored Dr. Thomas E. Starzl and the late Brian Reames, TRIO's founding president. The dinner was also a celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of TRIO. I knew that I would meet some pretty amazing people, but nothing could prepare me for the emotion and inspiration that accompanied each introduction to the transplant recipients, donors and donor families that I met in person. My spirit was lifted, no doubt in accord with all who attended the celebration!*

*The enormity of life's trials is beyond explanation and a crisis can bring people together in ways unlike any other. Those who have made a commitment to be an organ donor offer a tremendous and selfless gift beyond measure. To be able to put a human face to the stories of courage, hope and generosity of spirit instantly made the mission of TRIO very personal to me. For 25 years, TRIO has been improving the lives of those touched by the miracle of transplantation and meeting the dedicated and influential members validated how one life can forever change that of another.*

*Joann Cantrell*

Below is an excerpt of an article written by Joann Cantrell, which was published in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on Sunday, March 25, 2012. The article features a fellow TRIO member, Jane Barrett. Jane had a kidney transplant on March 2, 1988. With their permission, a section of the article is reprinted here.

### ***Jane Barrett's "Story" of her Kidney Transplant on March 2, 1988 – That's 24 years ago!***

*More than 113,000 men, women and children are currently on the national list awaiting organ transplants to save their lives. Thousands more are in need of tissue and cornea transplants to restore their mobility and sight. April is Donate Life Month, a national observance that helps increase awareness of the potential for organ, tissue, marrow, blood and cornea donations to save lives. The Center for Organ Recovery and Education (CORE) in Pittsburgh plays a critical role in helping match donors with patients in need. The organization is partnered with Donate Life America in launching a new campaign, "20 Million in 2012" to radically increase the number of people registered on state donor registries. Lives can be forever changed by those who have made a personal commitment to be an organ donor, a tremendous and selfless gift beyond measure.*

*Jane Barrett is someone who reflects on that gift daily. She never imagined that today, in 2012, she'd be living a full, productive life as a dental hygienist with kidneys that she received 24 years ago. The North Hills resident was in her early 20s when she made an appointment with a doctor for what she thought was the flu. After routine blood work came back out of sync, the doctor asked Jane to return for a second attempt, certain that there must have been a mistake in the lab for the numbers to be so off. The second report came back exactly the same and it was soon determined that Jane had a severe kidney disease. Two days later, a biopsy revealed that she was living on only 15% of her kidney function. She was astonished that she had lost 85% of the function without ever having any symptoms. Jane continued to live that way for seven years until beginning dialysis treatment and ultimately having to prepare for the inevitable transplant of both kidneys. She wore a pager and waited for six months. She will always remember that the call finally came and woke her up one morning at 3:45 a.m. Her transplant coordinator was calling to say that a match had been found.*

*"I was frightened, but I had complete trust in my doctor and received excellent care at Allegheny General Hospital. I was one of the very early patients back when transplants were uncommon, but I had faith in Dr. Dai Nghiem (now retired) who reassured and guided me through the entire process."*

*What made her situation even more unique was that the donor of Jane's kidneys was an 11-month-old infant who had died.*

*"I had never heard of such a thing where the organs of an infant could be transplanted into an adult. I thought of the baby who had died and the grieving parents who were from Alabama. They made such an emotional decision*



*24 years ago. For those parents to offer a gift of life in the midst of their sorrow was so wonderful. I was beyond grateful and overwhelmed with thankfulness.”*

*Although never receiving a response, Jane faithfully writes a letter every year without fail to the donor family.*

*“I thank them and let them know that I’m doing extremely well with my health. I tell them that I’m working and that I have a wonderful life. Not a day goes by when I don’t think about the family of my donor or the child that they lost. I made a decision to honor them by doing everything I possibly can in life to be a good person and to perform good works.”*

*Now Jane is committed not only to give back by being kind and caring, but by taking every opportunity to promote organ donor awareness.*

*“I never expected to live this long. I appreciate that there was a family in Alabama who gave the ultimate gift of life, especially during that time frame when it was not the most popular thing to do. To receive that gift through the loss of an infant from a family who knew nothing about her was an extremely humbling experience for Jane. For me, every day is like Christmas now. Every birthday is an unbelievable blessing. I am very aware that I have been so fortunate and I cherish and celebrate my life. To this day, I celebrate two birthdays, even more so my transplant birthday on March 2<sup>nd</sup>.”*

*Decades have passed since Jane received a second chance of life and her experience paved the way for her to become an advocate for organ donation with the realization that it is not only a second chance with life, but a great sacrifice and gift of love from the donor’s family.*

To read Joanne Cantrell’s entire article go to:

<http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/opinion/perspectives/the-next-page-how-organ-recipients-remember-their-donors-627939/?p=0>

#### **CURRENT TRIO-PITTSBURGH BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Mary Alice King (President), Rudy Molnar (Vice President), Rich Wegrzyn (Treasurer), Paul Armbruster (Secretary), Chris Armbruster, Anna DiPilato, Shannon Flynn, Kathy Jacobs, Carol Foglia, Tom Meshanko, Jo Anne Schwarz, DeeAnne Seeger, Georgene Thomas and Colleen Yost.

#### **CURRENT TRIO-PITTSBURGH CHAPTER HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS**

Dr. Kareem Abu-Elmagd, Dr. Thomas Cacciarelli, Dr. Barbara Carpenter, Dr. Robert Kormos, Dr. George Mazariegos, Dr. Dennis McNamara, Dr. Srinivas Murali, Dr. Obaid Shakil Shaikh, Dr. Ron Shapiro, Dr. Thomas Starzl, Susan Stuart, Dr. Henkie Tan, Dr. Ngoc Thai, Dr. Kusum Tom and Dr. Steven Webber.

#### **MEMBERSHIP**

TRO-Pittsburgh currently has 65 members. If you would like to renew your membership or become a member of TRIO reply back to this email and I will send you an application. You can also download a Membership Form from the TRIO website at: [www.trio-pittsburgh.org](http://www.trio-pittsburgh.org)

#### **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

Suzanna Masartis: Health Care Professional  
Eileen Schmitt-Metz: Health Care Professional

#### **HAPPY APRIL ANNIVERSARIES**

Melissa Bell: Heart recipient in April 2006  
Mike Currin: Kidney recipient on 4-14-06 and 6-7-07  
Eileen Pistelli: Living donor of a kidney to her godson on 4-19-10  
Tom Wilson III: Heart recipient on 4-30-97 and a kidney recipient on 11-10-2000

## **TO CONTACT TRIO-PITTSBURGH CHAPTER:**

Phone: 412-647-7461 or 1-877-647-3439

The mailing address is: TRIO Pittsburgh / 3601 Fifth Avenue, Room 601 / Pittsburgh, PA 15213

For more information about TRIO Pittsburgh, visit the website at [www.trio-pittsburgh.org](http://www.trio-pittsburgh.org)

## **TEAM TRIO - SOMETHING NEW!**

TRIO-Pittsburgh is forming a team to participate in the upcoming American Liver Foundation – Liver Life Walk. The walk is on Sunday, June 3, at the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium.

Check-in: 7:00 AM / Opening Ceremony: 8:30 AM / Walk Begins at 9:00 AM / After Party: 10:30 AM

All friends, family and members of TRIO-Pittsburgh can join.

Paul Armbruster will be the contact person or Team Captain.

Contact information: [paul\\_armbruster@yahoo.com](mailto:paul_armbruster@yahoo.com) or 412-653-0812

For more information about the walk visit: [http://go.liverfoundation.org/site/TR?fr\\_id=2891&pg=entry](http://go.liverfoundation.org/site/TR?fr_id=2891&pg=entry)

## **UPCOMING TRIO SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS**

TRIO Support Group Meetings are held on the third Sunday of the month, except in the months of August, due to our picnic, and in the month of December, due to our Holiday Party. The meetings begin at 1:30 PM and alternate between Allegheny General Hospital, Snyder Auditorium and UPMC Montefiore Hospital LHAS Auditorium. Flyers are normally sent out before the meetings as well as being posted on the TRIO website. Upcoming support group meetings will take place on:

**Sunday, May 20 at UPMC**

Sunday, June 17 at AGH

Sunday, July 15 at UPMC

Sunday, September 16 at AGH

Sunday, October 21 at UPMC

Sunday, November 18 at AGH

## **HEART SUPPORT GROUP MEETING**

The next scheduled Heart Support Group Meeting is on Saturday, May 26 at Panera Bread on the Blvd. of the Allies. The meeting begins at 12:00 and lasts until 1:30.

For more information, contact Tom Meshanko at: [t.meshanko@verizon.net](mailto:t.meshanko@verizon.net) or call 412-351-6704.

## **WESTERN PA KIDNEY SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS FOR MAY**

Saturday, May 12      10:00 AM      SOUTH HILLS

Meets at Jefferson Regional Medical Center (James Bibro Pavilion), Jefferson Hills

Contact Diana Bell 724-292-9318 or [dkbell1981@yahoo.com](mailto:dkbell1981@yahoo.com)

Sunday, May 6            2:00 PM            CRANBERRY SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Meets at Panera Bread, 20111 Route 19, Cranberry Twp, PA

Contact Nikki McKenna 412-216-0144 or [mckennanr@gmail.com](mailto:mckennanr@gmail.com)

Sunday, May 20            2:30 PM            PITTSBURGH WEST SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Meets at King's Restaurant, 500 Market Place Drive, Oakdale, PA 15071

Contact Mike Currin: 724-796-1603

Sunday, May 20            1:00 PM            PITTSBURGH EAST SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Meets at Panera Bread in **Monroeville at the Miracle Mile Shopping Center**

Contact Robb Wilson 412-823-5630 or [robbw81@yahoo.com](mailto:robbw81@yahoo.com)

Pediatric Contact: Lori Bible 724-981-0368 or [sbible6@msn.com](mailto:sbible6@msn.com)

For more information about kidney disease and support groups visit [www.wpakidneysupport.org](http://www.wpakidneysupport.org)

## **LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS for LIVER DISEASE**

### **GREATER PITTSBURGH PBC (PRIMARY BILIARY CIRRHOSIS) SUPPORT GROUP**

Meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at Panera Bread – Waterworks Mall – Fox Chapel  
For more information contact Ellen Kerber or email at [kerber@kerbers.com](mailto:kerber@kerbers.com)

### **LIVING WITH HEPATITIS SUPPORT GROUP**

Meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month at  
330 South 9th Street, Main Bldg., Room 182 Pittsburgh, PA 15203  
For more information contact Jen Warner at 412-535-2670

### **WESTMORELAND COUNTY SUPPORT GROUP**

Meets every other month on the 3rd Monday (Jan, March, May, July, Sept and Nov) at  
Hempfield Church of Christ 144 Hugh Black Rd Greensburg, PA 15601  
For more information contact Antonia or Mike Redigan at 724-423-5948 or [antoniaredigan@hotmail.com](mailto:antoniaredigan@hotmail.com)

### **CIRRHOSIS ONLINE SUPPORT GROUP**

Online cirrhosis support group at [www.mdjunction.com/cirrhosis](http://www.mdjunction.com/cirrhosis)

For more information go to: AMERICAN LIVER FOUNDATION - WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CHAPTER  
at [www.liverfoundation.org/chapters/westernpa/](http://www.liverfoundation.org/chapters/westernpa/)

## **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

Monday, April 30: Both AGH and UPMC will close their respective **Donor Awareness Month Activities** with:  
AGH: Transplant Recipient Parade from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM followed by  
A Rose Bush Dedication Ceremony in the Exhibit Area at 1:00 PM (contact Rhonda Byrd: 412-359-5017)  
UPMC: Celebration of Life Program at Montefiore Hospital, LHAS Auditorium at 3:00 PM  
Contact UPMC Donate Life Office: [sticlinic@upmc.edu](mailto:sticlinic@upmc.edu) or 412-647-5066

Saturday, June 2: **Izzie's Dash for Organ Donation** at North Boundary Park, Cranberry Twp.  
Visit [Izziesgifts.org](http://Izziesgifts.org) for more information and to register for the events.

Sunday, June 3: **ALF Liver Life Walk** at the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium  
Join **TEAM TRIO** Contact Paul Armbruster at [paul\\_armbruster@yahoo.com](mailto:paul_armbruster@yahoo.com) or call 412-653-0812

Saturday, June 9: **The Mulligan – A Second Shot at Life** at Seven Oaks Country Club in Beaver, PA  
Contact: [themulligan2012@gmail.com](mailto:themulligan2012@gmail.com)

## **In closing:**

### **Moments with God**

Happy Moments...  
*Praise God*

Difficult Moments...  
*Seek God*

Quiet Moments...  
*Worship God*

Painful Moments...  
*Trust God*

Every Moment  
*Thank God*

Respectfully submitted by Paul Armbruster, TRIO Pittsburgh Secretary