



The **LINK**
EMPLOYEE NEWS

S P R I N G 2 0 0 3



Gina
**Transplanting
Hope**

Gina Velar has turned personal tragedy into triumph by working as an organ donor advocate.

Courage takes many forms. Whether it's standing up for principle in the face of unpopular opinion, displaying leadership in times of crisis, running into a burning building to save others or playing a sport in spite of injury, our mettle is constantly tested. How we respond to these situations determines the depth of our character, the portrait of who we really are.

Gina Velar knows all about tests, all about courage.

Six years ago this September, the accounts payable specialist for the Allegheny County Housing Authority lost her son, Douglas Grinage, to violence. He would be 26 today had he not been in the line of fire while trying to break up a dispute between two others on a street corner over a paltry 20 dollars. Instead, the gunshot left Grinage clinically brain dead.

For Velar, wrestling with this senseless, terrible loss has been the toughest of exams. No mother should have to bury her child.

But through her boundless faith in God and a selfless act that, in a sense, ensured her son continued life, Velar's emotional wounds are healing. By offering to donate her son's organs and tissues for transplant to others in need, Velar's act of courage created an avenue for life to flow where there was once only death.

"My son is seeing for somebody. He's breathing for somebody. His heart is pumping for somebody. His kidneys, his liver, his pancreas, 250 bone marrows, they're all helping someone else," said Velar. "He's not in my sight, but he's living everywhere."

The concept of one person like Grinage helping as many as 256 is remarkable, if only because there are so many patients on waiting lists who never receive the help they need in time.

According to Pat Kornick, a Vice President of Corporate Development and spokesperson for CORE, the Center for

Organ Recovery and Education, based in Pittsburgh, such a disparity in potential donors versus transplant candidates can be narrowed greatly if more people would take the time to learn the facts about organ donation and register to help.

"Currently, 42 percent of Pennsylvania drivers are designated as donors, with 25 percent of West Virginians doing the same," said Kornick, whose organization works with 155 hospitals in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and New York, providing educational programming as well as counseling to potential donor families. Six of those hospitals conduct organ transplants with the rest offering tissue or corneal transplants.

CORE also organizes seminars for healthcare and social work staff featuring first-person testimonials by members of donor families. These programs are designed to give a better understanding of methods used to present options to families whose loved ones may offer hope to others and a second chance at life. Velar lends her services to CORE in this capacity and more.

"I'll go to [UPMC Presbyterian Hospital] and speak with new

interns and they'll ask questions about ways to approach a family after a loss," Velar said. "I tell them there's no good way to tell somebody your family member is dead and to approach each situation differently. At the time of my son's accident, my CORE representative told me his son was in the hospital for five days after being in a car wreck, which gave him time to think about donation. I had only an hour with my son."

Velar also stresses with doctors the importance of location when discussing organ donation with family members: "Don't do it in a lobby. Go to a private place. Doctors don't always think to do that. You have to be more tactful."

"Gina is a wonderful, dedicated individual," said Kornick. "We work with a large group of volunteers, but there are certain volunteers who are seasoned or experienced in sharing their stories that CORE tries to work with in different media. Gina is one of them. She can speak at a more emotional level about her son, why she chose to donate and how it's been beneficial for her."

As part of her volunteer work, Velar
(Continued - Next page)



THE FACTS:

- At the six CORE-affiliated organ transplant hospitals, approximately 1,600 people are awaiting organ transplantation.
- Between 10,000 and 12,000 people die annually who are considered medically suitable for organ donation, yet only an estimated 6,000 donate.
- One organ, tissue and corneal (eye) donor may help between 200 and 400 people.
- More than 50,000 people await a kidney transplant. Following kidneys, livers, lungs and hearts are the organs in greatest demand for transplantation.
- Major organized religions support donation, with some strongly endorsing it.

For more information on CORE and organ transplantation, please call 1-800-366-6777 or log on to www.CORE.org.



Birthday!

Happy



Name	Month	Day
Swearingen, James S.	March	2
Kobert, David A.	March	6
Velar, Gina L.	March	6
Brown, Donna K.	March	8
Sowers, Rebecca A.	March	8
Hohman, William E.	March	10
King, Lance O.	March	10
Meister, Lee A.	March	10
Mioduski, Edward E.	March	12
Carson, Kathleen M.	March	13
Vogel, Michael J.	March	13
Fusaro, Frank	March	18
Mcgee, William J.	March	19
Polinski, Mark R.	March	20
Beatty, Charles	March	21
Rossi, Robert C.	March	23
Domes, Paula L.	March	25
Victor Jr, Mario	March	27
Livadas, Nannette	March	28
Rose, Kathryn J.	March	30
Hayden, Ricardo	March	31
Majewski, John W.	April	1
Loos, Mark L.	April	4
Davis, Charles	April	7
Brough, Ronald G.	April	12
Mactann, William S.	April	13
Reed, Anthony G.	April	13
Jackson, Martin	April	15
Contos, Judith	April	19
Moik, Deborah A.	April	21
Allen, Dean A.	April	22
Hayes, Robert P.	April	22
Simko, Nicholas R.	April	22
Hovanec, Joan B.	April	27
Coleman, Tracey	April	28
Javorsky, Portia	April	30
Norgren, Charles M.	April	30
Lostetter, Kevin J.	May	3
Ingold, Roy D.	May	7
Habarka, John C.	May	8
Kotchey, John W.	May	15
Nelson, Inez D.	May	15
Behe, Sandra A.	May	17
Smith, Jack A.	May	17
Brown, Charles	May	20
Greathouse, James J.	May	20
Kearney, John E.	May	21
Charlie, Marsha L.	May	22
Peddicord, Rena L.	May	22
Gabbianelli, Robert	May	23
Marshall, Shirley L.	May	23
Fields, Erica	May	26
Fuqua, Tasha C.	May	28
Robinson, Kimberly	May	31
Krally, Robert F.	June	2
Murrell, Anthony J.	June	2
Woodson, Holly	June	2
Cole, Thomas L.	June	4
Kormick, Gina M.	June	8
Johnson, Toi R.	June	9
Joos, Mariah	June	9
Thorn, William E.	June	14

Johnson, Lamar	June	18
Mccary, Eli	June	18
Collins, Janice	June	21
Carter, Marvin J.	June	22
Potts, Art W.	June	22
Proud, Dennis K.	June	22
Bowman, Carolyn A.	June	23
Kichty, Kristine C.	June	24
Ammon, Donald	June	25
Bennett, Tony	June	26
Robinson, Norma J.	June	28
Kudrav, Kenneth G.	June	30

(Transplanting Hope - Continued)

does not speak directly with potential donor families but has contributed to audio and visual projects produced by CORE.

Her efforts have also paid off on the job. Since her involvement with CORE began, Velar has spoken openly to her ACHA co-workers about her experience and how important it is to be a registered donor. To date, Velar said five people have signed on.

Part of Velar's healing process also included meeting one of her son's transplant recipients (donor families are not allowed to contact organ recipients or their families but may themselves be reached through CORE). In 2001, the Rankin resident met with a 32-year-old Connellsville, Pa. woman who received Grinage's pancreas. After a lengthy written correspondence, the two greeted each other in person. Although not encouraged by CORE, the recipient wanted to thank Velar for her thoughtfulness and support.

"It was such a joyful thing knowing she wanted to meet me as much as I wanted to meet her," said Velar. "It helped put it together for me, to know that it was worth it to see somebody receiving a part of my son and seeing how it helped. It's hard to explain how happy I was to see her. I can't put it into words."

QUOTE OF THE MONTH...

"Any disorder in your life can create the death of your dream."
— Mike Murdock

Fact from Fiction

Dispelling Myths About Transplantation

With more than 80,000 people awaiting organ and/or tissue transplants annually in the U.S., one of the biggest challenges in increasing the number of registered donors has been the need to dispel numerous myths about transplantation.

"We're making progress through education, but it's a slow process," said CORE spokesperson Pat Karnick. The following is a list of common misconceptions, accompanied by the truth:

1. "If I'm in an accident and the doctors see my donor card, they won't work to save my life." — The No. 1 myth. Paramedics, doctors and nurses will do everything to save your life. In fact, the medical team treating you is separate from the medical team that CORE will bring to the hospital to perform the organ and tissue recovery.

2. "If I donate, I won't be able to have an open casket at my funeral." — Donating organs and tissue does not interfere with viewing or funeral arrangements.

3. "If I die of a heart attack, I cannot donate anything, so what's the point?" — False. While it's true that traditional organ donation requires a person to be in a hospital, on a ventilator, and pronounced brain dead by at least two doctors, including the attending physician, heart attack victims may donate tissue and corneas.

4. "My family will override my decision." — False. Though CORE will talk with the family before proceeding with a recovery, a donor designation or signed donor card in CORE's region is legally binding for people 18 and older. If someone is under 18 or in the absence of a donor designation or signed donor card, the family can make the decision regarding donation.

5. "My family will be charged for my donation." — Neither your family nor your estate will pay for anything related to donation.

Congratulations to...

Chuck (Maintenance) and Margie Beatty on the birth of their son Nickolas on 1/30/03.

Nannette Livadas on her nuptials to Sheldon Goettel on 2/8/03.

Michelle Turner on her new position as confidential secretary/librarian, Budget/Revenue Department effective 2/5/03.

Submit story ideas to:

C. Lynn Greer
Director, Human Resources
Allegheny County Housing Authority
625 Stanwix Street, 12th floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412-402-2452 (phone)
412-402-2652 (fax)

ALLEGHENY COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



Norma Robinson
January



Patricia Caslin
December

Correction

In the previous issue of "The Link", errors were made in the article entitled ACHA Promotes Bev Moore to Assistant Executive Director. Corrections are as follows:

Beverly Moore holds a Masters Degree in Professional Leadership and Organization Development from Carlow College. Her education process began years ago in Madison School, Schenley Heights as the daughter of Sara and Hiram Lewis of Milwaukee Street.

Next was the Ethnan Elementary School on Centre Avenue and then Schenley High School where, under music director Mr. Keister, Moore's vocal talent began to surface as a member of the school choir. Keister encouraged her to go to the Julliard School of Music.

Moore's singing is saluted throughout the city and especially at her church, Ethnan Temple, where she was formerly director of music and is a recently ordained elder.

NEW HIRES

Employee	Hire Date	Position	Department
Baulding, Barbara	1/14/03	PROGRAM MANAGER	Resident Services
Brown, Michael B.	1/6/03	HOUSING INSPECTOR	HCVP
Domes, Paula L.	12/18/02	CLERK	Operations
Franciscus, William R.	10/21/02	HOUSING COUNSELOR	Intake
Giordano, Frank J.	1/6/03	HOUSING INSPECTOR	HCVP
Joos, Mariah	12/18/02	CONFIDENTIAL SECRETARY	Legal
Layman, Corey A.	12/18/02	INTERN	Development
Manuppelli, Mark P.	1/6/03	ACCOUNTANT	Finance
Marquis, Mary A.	10/15/02	DIVISION AIDE	Intake
Royal, Jackie	12/18/02	DIVISION AIDE	HCVP
Strozier, Jr., Harris	12/18/02	SECURITY	Security
Wesoff, Nancy L.	2/18/03	DIRECTOR	HCVP



Left to Right: Barbara Baulding hired as Program Manager, Resident Services; C. Lynn Greer promoted to Director, Human Resources; James Bulls promoted to Interim Director, Intake; Nancy Wesoff hired as Director, Housing Choice Voucher Program; Kimberly Longwell promoted to Interim Director, Housing Operations.



You'll Be Glad To Call to Home!

New Hires - Front Row (left to right): Michael B. Brown, Michelle Turner (promoted), and Frank J. Giordano. Second Row: Paula L. Domes, William R. Franciscus, and Mariah Joos. Third Row: Barbara Baulding, Nancy L. Wesoff, Harris Strozier, Jr. and Mary A. Marquis.

PROMOTIONS



C. Lynn Greer, Director of Human Resources



Kim Longwell, Interim Director, Housing Operations



James Bulls, Interim Director, Intake



Nancy L. Wesoff, Director, Housing Choice Voucher Program



Barbara Baulding, Program Manager, Resident Services

NEW HIRES