

## **UNOS Organ Center at 35 – additional perspectives from staff**

### **What sort of changes have you noticed over time in terms of new technology, new types of transplants, etc.?**

“From my short 11 months here at UNOS from 2004-2005 to my return in 2011, ELECTRONIC OFFERS were implemented. EO’s made our job so much more efficient. We would hardly ever get through a few hundred patients on a kidney list, and now we get through thousands! And we were constantly on the phone, giving full details of every case to several doctors in a 12-hour period. The OC sounded like what I imagine the pit in Wall Street sounds like, everyone talking at once - a cacophony of voices. I am so happy the HOPE Act has come into play and we are able to serve another demographic. Also, VCA’s! Faces and hands- just amazing!” –Sandy Batts Starr

### **What has stayed the same about what you do?**

“What has stayed the same is being of service to the transplant community. We are here to assist in any way that we can, so that coordinators can spend their time taking care of the donors and their families, while we find recipients for those organs and get them to where they need to go.” –Sandy Batts Starr

“What has stayed the same is transportation. Transportation can be difficult when things you can’t control happen, for example, weather, mechanical problems with the plane, etc... And it seems as though there are fewer and fewer flights available and airline hours are getting shorter. It really makes trying to place organs tough when you can’t get it to a center because there are no flights.” –Kim Betancourt

### **What about the relationships you have established with members over time?**

“It’s nice to know who you will be dealing with because you know what to expect from them. For example, when I see a certain coordinator is working I know they will want to know what time the kidney will arrive before they call their doctor (post OR), so I know I need to check on flight information before I call that coordinator. And some of them I have been talking to for so many years, it’s like we are friends. Out of the blue one day some coordinators from an OPO sent us cookies, just because they enjoy talking to us. And with some, we joke around and have a good laugh especially when we are stressing out.” –Kim Betancourt

### **What were your first impressions when you began working in the Organ Center?**

“I honestly came in with an open mind and a blank slate ready to learn as much as possible. I knew the basics of the position and that I would be on the phone with different hospitals, but now that I have finished training, all the pieces have come together. The Organ Center really is a well-oiled machine.” – Jennifer Harter

### **What sort of continuity do you feel when you’re working with people who have worked in the Organ Center a long time?**

“When working with people who have been here long term, I feel like they are always hardworking, have a system they stick to with their casework which makes the workload go smoothly, having them makes the shift feel a lot less stressful knowing they are they’re there to help. I feel like they always

have a good idea of what's going on in the room and help to keep things stable, even when focused on their own cases." – Brittany Cheatham

"One thing I appreciate most about working in the Organ Center is that the more experienced OPS's are always looking out for the newer OPS's. Whether they are giving advice on cases or making sure we avoid making the same mistakes they made, there is a strong sense of unity in the Organ Center." – Octavia Goodman

**Can you describe a particular moment that summed up for you what the Organ Center does?**

"There are so many specific stories. The one that sticks out for me is when I was part of a Canada case where a liver was brought in and split between two babies who were both very sick. And down the way, Roger [Brown, Director of the Organ Center] posted pictures of one of the children "before" and "after". It made my heart swell to know I was a part of all that. We don't see a lot of the outcomes of our efforts at the beginning of the process. Every now and again, a recipient or a donor's family will come and visit. To hear them express their gratitude for what we do, and to see recipients who are now healthy and living well, is one of the greatest joys I get from this work. Being a part of something so much bigger than myself, helping to turn tragic loss into life-giving situations, is a huge achievement and I'm so grateful for the opportunity to serve." –Sandy Batts Starr

"I had a case with a pediatric donor and everyone kept declining the kidneys due to the size. I really wasn't expecting to place the kidneys because they were starting to have a lot of [preservation] time, and it was getting to be late in the day with less flights out. I finally got to a center I knew might accept them. I had checked on flights before I called the coordinator, and by the time the kidneys reached the hospital they would have about 30 hours of [preservation] time. The center accepted the kidneys. The next day I happened to talk to the same coordinator from that center. I asked if the kidneys were used and was told they transplanted them and the patient was doing well. It's very rare we hear about the outcome once we send out organs, and because it was a pediatric donor it really stuck with me. It was nice to hear and put things in perspective." –Kim Betancourt

"As the newest OPS, I don't have many OC experiences to look back on; however, there is a certain feeling when placing an organ... hope. That recipient is now one step closer to living a longer and healthier life... and a second chance. I worked in an Emergency Department previously, so I have seen death and loss. I wouldn't say I am hardened to it, but it is not a new experience. However, now I get to see that loss turn into something beautiful and that is something I am proud to be a part of." –Jennifer Harter

"Listening to a mother tell the story of her daughter, born with severe physical challenges, who became a donor when she was 15 years old." –Ben Wolford