



## **Media Release**

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### **Ben Taub Contributes to Life-Saving “New Day” for Thousands of Organ Transplant Recipients**

A team from Ben Taub General Hospital and LifeGift Organ Donation Center received a national honor during an Organ Donation Breakthrough Collaborative learning congress May 18-19 in Pittsburgh.

Ben Taub Hospital and LifeGift leaders and clinicians were awarded the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Collaborative 75% Award, which recognizes teams who achieved a 75 percent “conversion” rate—when potential organ donors become actual donors—during a six-month period since Fall 2004.

“I am in awe,” remarked Johnnie Stein, assistant administrator for the Harris County Hospital District. “In two short years, thousands more lives were saved following a government-sponsored program which requested accountability and demanded responsiveness. It was, quite simply, revolutionary.”

“The award symbolizes the hospital’s ongoing commitment to saving lives through organ and tissue donation,” remarked LifeGift’s Tina LeVert, manager of LifeGift’s Level-I Trauma Center and a faculty leader of the national Collaborative effort. “I feel so proud of our partnership with Ben Taub, which always has tried to offer families the opportunity to take something positive out of the death of their loved ones.”

Collaborative team members included Ben Taub Hospital’s Mary Holt Ashley, Terence Cunningham, Dr. Bradford G. Scott, Elizabeth deGuzman, Mary Kurian and LifeGift’s LeVert, Kim Davis and Elena Mendoza.

Ben Taub Hospital has a lot to be proud of. During the six month period between November 2004 and April, the hospital achieved an 80 percent conversion rate. These results contributed to a national increase during 2004 of 11 percent over the 2003 rate and a total of 6,000 more transplants nationally. Prior to the Collaborative, the national organ donation conversion rate nationally hovered at 50 percent.

Asserting that it’s a new day in the organ donation arena, Collaborative Co-Chair and LifeGift Chief Operating Officer Teresa Shafer applauded the nation’s hospitals and organ procurement organizations (OPOs).

“It takes courage to move a system. We have a compelling mission, a passionate pursuit, and simply put, we push the envelope.”

The meeting also explored what now is the focus of the ongoing collaborative effort – increasing the number of organs recovered from each donor in order to save even more lives. Currently, the national average is 3.1 organs per donor. Leaders now are encouraging hospitals to commit to yielding at least 3.75 per donor.

Finally, the hospital and OPO participants were most excited when Collaborative Co-Chair Dr. John Chessare asserted that the elimination of individuals dying on the national waiting list is a realistic goal.

“What it will take is a commitment by all teams to reach their 75 percent conversion rate and achieve a four organ per donor yield.” This would equal 36,000 more organs recovered every year.

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