

ROUTE 422

Business Advisor

Serving the Route 422, 100, 202, and Route 30 Corridors in Montgomery, Chester and Berks Counties.

Love, Life, and Organ Donation



Presorted
 Standard
 U.S. Postage
PAID
 Pottstown, PA
 Permit No. 95



Ken Lovely, Danielle Bailey, Dawn Steelman, and Amanda Belton

PHOTOS BY STEVE LAONER PHOTOGRAPHY

Love, Life, and Organ Donation

The Growth and Generosity of the Transplant Alliance Foundation

By Michelle Seitzer

You may not think of an organ transplant as a love story. But after talking to Ken Lovely about his inspirational work with the Transplant Alliance Foundation, I believe there is no better way to see it.

From the loving decision to donate organs to the new life that such a gift provides, the process is marked by compromise and commitment — and full of risks and rewards.

The Foundation's entire history is actually built on the love story of Ken and Mary Jo, who met and married a few years after the sudden and unexpected death of Mary Jo's first husband in 1998.

In the face of her own loss, Mary Jo had restored the hope of new life for others by donating her first husband's organs. But her story didn't stop there: Mary Jo herself went on to become a two-time lung transplant recipient.

The first transplant was fairly straightforward financially thanks to Ken's excellent health insurance policy. However, throughout the process, Ken and Mary Jo learned about the high costs — many of them hidden and lesser known to the general public — of such a procedure.



Attend the popular Mission Monday events where 100 percent of donations go directly to families in need!

From lost income, hospital travel and inpatient time, extensive waiting periods, medication costs, the possibilities of rejection or a damaged organ, and so much more, the couple began to think about ways to help other families who did not have the same financial resources or coverage.

After her second transplant in June 2015 (following an illness that caused a rejection of her 2007 transplant), Ken recalls Mary Jo's instructions in the recovery room: "Start a foundation or you're sleeping outside tonight!"

Building the Foundation

The Transplant Alliance Foundation established their non-profit status and enjoyed tremendous growth thanks to her and Ken's outpouring of love and generosity to the families they served.

Despite innumerable ongoing health challenges for Mary Jo after her surgeries, her commitment to transplant advocacy remained steadfast. After Mary Jo passed away in 2021, the donations really began pouring in, Ken recalls.

(Continued on page 8)



Bingo hall registration area

(Continued from page 7)

Danielle Bailey, who serves as the Foundation's Chief Executive Officer and Board President, has been equally instrumental in its growth over the years. "I wanted to hit half a million by the end of 2025, when I planned to retire, but Danielle wanted to double that," Ken said. And that's what happened — by December 31st, they hit the \$1 million dollar milestone.

They've outgrown several different Bingo halls and spaces since the beginning, and their events continue to sell out and draw many new players, donors, and beneficiaries who are happy to support such a meaningful and vital cause.

The Real Financial Burdens of Organ Transplants

According to Ken, most families have to pay anywhere from \$5,000 to \$40,000 out of pocket — even with insurance coverage. Sometimes, out-of-pocket and associated costs can reach to \$100,000, a number that he and Mary Jo were faced with when her second lung transplant was required. At that time, Ken was self-employed and no longer had the same health insurance coverage as her first procedure.

As if those financial challenges aren't enough to bear while going through illnesses or injuries so significant they require an organ transplant, Ken said that many people cannot even get on a transplant list until they can show they have the \$5,000 to \$40,000 in the bank.

Getting on a list also doesn't mean the wait is over, or that the recipient's body will not reject the transplant. For most people, there is a two-month hospital stay after surgery — with daily observation for signs of rejection.

There are also medications required before and after surgery; some of which can cost upwards of \$2,000 per pill. Not all health insurance providers cover those expenses.

"We knew we couldn't fix insurance," said Ken. "But being able to give people money that makes a real difference — that's been so rewarding."



The current event hall holds over 325 people!



Super Sunday Bingo, Wacky Wednesday Bingo, Throwback Thursday Bingo, Fabulous Friday Bingo... Join the fun at the Transplant Alliance Foundation's State Street Bingo Hall!

How Can YOU Help?

In the early days of the organization, Mary Jo and Ken had developed a variety of creative and innovative ways to generate donations and raise money for transplant families, from Ken's home-based Christmas light show to the first Bingo games with just a handful of people in attendance.

Now, they host popular Mission Monday events (where 100 percent of donations go directly to families in need), cash Bingo games, and fundraiser Bingo gatherings and giveaways at the current hall — which holds over 325 people.

Raffle baskets are largely paid for by generous members of the Foundation, so this is an area where the support of local businesses would be greatly appreciated, according to Ken.

The Foundation also sends out about 20,000 letters each quarter (which doesn't cost much on account of their charity status), but the response is minimal. "We're lucky if we get 20 replies," says Ken.

The Transplant Alliance Foundation welcomes any community partners, individuals, and businesses who want to join them in giving and supporting the work that Mary Jo and Ken started — to keep writing more stories of life, love, and organ donation.

For additional information, please contact Danielle Bailey, President / CEO, Transplant Alliance Foundation / Transplant Alliance Bingo, at 484-752-8073. Transplant Alliance Foundation is headquartered at 799 State Street, Pottstown, PA 19464. For additional information, please visit www.TransplantAllianceBingo.com and www.TransplantAlliance.org. Read more about donating and getting involved here: <https://www.transplantalliance.org/volunteer-opportunities/>

Transplant Alliance Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit, mission is to spread awareness about Organ Donation by using our resources to publicly share our personal experiences. We do this through events, fundraising to help others in need and through volunteering. Our goal is to support as many people as we can who are waiting for a transplant, healing from their transplant and those that have become donor families.

