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**Contact: Jeanette Slakey**  
**504.232.1479**  
[jslakey@organawareness.org](mailto:jslakey@organawareness.org)

## **2003 ORGAN DONATION NUMBERS UP 7 % OVER 2002**

### **TRANSPLANT WAITING LIST LONGER AT YEAR'S END THAN AT BEGINNING OF YEAR**

**New Orleans, LA, March 26, 2004** – Louisiana's organ donation numbers increased by seven percent in 2003 over the previous year, according to numbers released this week by United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS). In 2003, 119 people selflessly gave the gift of organ donation, up from 111 in 2002. But the transplant waiting list was longer at year's end than in January 2003, causing donation and transplantation experts to feel the urgent need for donors even more keenly.

“More and more, transplantation is seen as an accepted treatment for organ failure,” says Pam Kancher, executive director of the National Donor Awareness Foundation. “Consequently, more doctors are recommending it to patients, giving more people than ever the hope of life-saving transplants. Unfortunately, even with this rise in deceased donors, and the increases in living donors, there are still not enough donated organs for those waiting. The need is more urgent than ever.”

Nationwide, UNOS numbers show the highest annual increase since 1998, with donation numbers rising 4.3 percent. Nearly 6,500 people across the country became deceased donors in 2003, with more than 25,000 transplants performed from these and living donors.

“People are dying unnecessarily while waiting for transplants,” says Kancher. “This is a preventable problem, but it requires people to learn more about organ donation and talk to their families about their wishes. That is what we hope to communicate even more strongly to Louisianians in 2004.”

*The National Donor Awareness Foundation was founded in 1999 as the Legacy Donor Foundation. It is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization that provides funding to educate the public about organ donation to foster informed family acceptance of the process. Its mission is to prevent loss of human life due to lack of organ donors. The Foundation encourages people to make the decision to become donors and to share their wishes with loved ones.*

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