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**AFRICAN AMERICANS, LATINOS AND ASIANS DONATE AND RECEIVE
ORGANS IN EQUAL MEASURE, BUT KIDNEY WAITING LIST CONTINUES TO GROW**

**Association of Organ Procurement Organizations Salutes Givers of Life, Urges Donor Designation
on National Minority Donor Awareness Day, Aug. 1**

McLean, VA—July 31, 2009—On the eve of National Minority Donor Awareness Day, the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations (AOPO) called attention to the important role that minorities play in saving the lives of transplant candidates and addressing the ever-growing need for donation in multicultural communities impacted by a high prevalence of kidney failure.

In 2008, a third of all deceased organ donors were African American (16% of the total), Latino (14%), Asian (2.4%) or members of other major ethnic groups. These percentages are similar to those among the nearly 28,000 individuals who received life-saving transplants last year, reflecting the equitable distribution of organs that distinguishes the U.S. organ allocation system.

However, the need for donated kidneys continues to grow, especially among minorities. Among the 102,950 patients currently on the OPTN National Organ Transplant Waiting List, 80 percent are in need of kidneys; among these more than six in ten are minorities. In light of these daunting statistics, the need for minority donors is critical because the chance of matching a donated organ is greater when donor and recipients are of the same ethnicity.

The need for kidneys is especially great among minorities because of the high incidence of hypertension, diabetes and other medical conditions that lead to renal failure. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, Native Americans are four times more likely than Whites to suffer from diabetes. African Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and Latinos are three times more likely than Whites to suffer from kidney disease.

While the rates at which African American, Latino and Asian families consent to organ donation on behalf of loved ones is at or near all-time highs in some communities, some minorities are reluctant to designate themselves as organ and tissue donors on state donor registries. Studies often cite distrust of the medical community, adherence to misconceptions, and low prioritization as reasons for not registering. In the face of these challenges, organ procurement organizations nationwide employ specialists to educate multicultural communities regarding the opportunity to donate, while highly trained family care specialists guide families in a culturally compassionate manner as parents, children and siblings face the loss of loved ones, frequently under sudden circumstances.

About AOPO

AOPO is a non-profit, national organization representing all federally designated organ procurement organizations (OPOs). The association represents and serves the OPOs through advocacy, support and development of activities that will maximize the availability of organs and tissues and enhance the quality, effectiveness and integrity of the donation process. The Executive Committee of AOPO consists of seven elected officials – President, President-Elect, Medical Advisor, Secretary-Treasurer, Member-At-Large, Medical Advisor-Elect, Immediate Past President and AOPO's Executive Director.