

NEWS RELEASE

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**KOREAN STUDENTS VISIT U.S. ORGAN PROCUREMENT ORGANIZATIONS TO
STUDY ORGAN DONATION**

*Sponsored by the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare, and the Ministry of Gender
Equality and Family*

McLean, VA—July 30, 2010—This week, four students from Kangwon National University in South Korea arrived in the United States to study organ donation outreach. They will spend the next two weeks with organ procurement organizations (OPOs) across the East Coast including *New York Organ Donor Network, New Jersey Organ and Tissue Sharing Network, Gift of Life Donor Program, Washington Regional Transplant Community and LifeNet Health*. The team, named “Amazing Treasure of Organ” (ATO), will also visit the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) in Richmond, Va.

Although organ donation rates in Korea are growing, they are well below the average in the U.S. and other developed countries for several reasons. For example, in Korea, it is much harder to sign up to be an organ donor. In the U.S., individuals can easily sign up at the Department of Motor Vehicles, or through online registries. Koreans must go to a large hospital, or a designated donation center. In Korea, on average, it takes two days to declare brain death because the process involves religious leaders as well as physicians. This added stress can cause families to reconsider their decision to donate, or the patient’s heart could stop beating during this period. Finally, some members of the Confucian faith believe that the body should be buried in its entirety.

ATO hopes to change Korean public perception of organ donation by studying the U.S. “opt-in” model, and the advanced community education and outreach programs that these OPOs have developed. Each OPO has prepared a unique multi-day schedule that includes educational opportunities such as community partnerships, faith-based outreach, donor family advocacy and patient services.

Elling Eidbo, Executive Director of the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations, notes, “OPOs here in the US have worked tirelessly to dispel myths, build trust and collaborate with their communities to try to improve donation for transplantation. We are delighted that these students chose to come and learn from these organizations, and we look forward to helping them likewise, save lives in Korea through donation and transplantation.”

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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.