

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Greetings Colleagues,

As National Social WorkMonth concludes I'm reflecting on what to write for my first Presidential letter. My overriding thought is that the

pace of change this year is a bit overwhelming. There's a lot going on in transplant and the world in general. As social workers we have many obligations, and I'm sure we can agree there's a lot of work to be done on all fronts. Fortunately, spring is a time of renewal, and I hope that you find yourself enjoying nicer weather and opportunities to recharge your spirits.

I'm energized and excited by the work happening with STSW. We've welcomed several new board members and they have hit the ground running. If you haven't had the opportunity to attend one of the organ group's calls, I strongly encourage you to do so. Even if the call isn't related to your specific organ group, there are great opportunities to learn and engage with colleagues between conferences. The [Beats by Social Work podcast](#) also offers great learning as well as options to get transplant-specific CEUs that count towards credentialing.

I'm especially excited to share that **Tiffany Coco** has agreed to serve as STSW's social media/marketing chair, which is a new role. We should soon have a presence on Instagram, and there's a plan to add a calendar page to the STSW website so you can see all the various activities,

dates, and deadlines. Please check the website and use the Forum to stay in touch – it's our space to seek advice, provide support, and learn of our challenges and triumphs. Have a wonderful spring!

Sincerely,

*Clif*

Clifton Hill, LCSW, CCTSW  
President, STSW

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## 2023 CONFERENCE UPDATE

Kay Kendall, MSW, LISW-s, CCTSW-MCS  
National Conference Chair

The Conference Planning Committee is busy with planning the 2023, 38<sup>th</sup> STSW annual conference. This year we will be meeting in San Diego the week of October 9<sup>th</sup>. Information about the hotel/conference site is on the [web page](#) and you can make reservations for the Loews Coronado Bay Hotel.

The pre-conference will be held Monday afternoon the 9<sup>th</sup>. This is an opportunity to participate in a 3 hour, 3-CEU workshop that will explore a topic in depth. STSW board members will be holding our annual board meeting later that afternoon. The first full day of the conference will be Tuesday October 10<sup>th</sup>. The conference continues on Wednesday and a half day Thursday, the 12<sup>th</sup>.

Our conference planning committee reviewed submitted abstracts recently and we are very pleased with the submissions. Typically, 15 to 18 CEUs are offered for the conference. We will host a "meet and greet" on the 9<sup>th</sup> and our annual Welcome Reception will be Tuesday evening.



We were so pleased with the attendance at the 2022 conference, and we look forward to seeing you this fall. Please check the webpage regularly – more details about the program and conference registration will be posted as they become available. We will also post information about the application date for scholarships that support the registration fee for STSW members.

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## STSW COMMITTEE UPDATES

### ► Tech Committee:

Katie Newton, Chair

Coming soon - STSW on social media! The Tech Committee is excited to share news that work has begun on creating a Social Media Subcommittee, led by **Tiffany Coco**, to help spread the word on STSW and keep us connected to important issues happening in the world of transplant. Tiffany is in the process of identifying members for the subcommittee to help develop a plan of action and begin working creating STSW content on various social media platforms. If you are interested in joining the Social Media Subcommittee, please reach out to Tiffany Coco by email at [Coco.Tiffany@mayo.edu](mailto:Coco.Tiffany@mayo.edu)



### ► Research Committee

Kate Artin, Committee Co-Chair

## 2022 STSW Survey Results are In!

A HUGE thank you to **Laurie McDonald** for compiling and analyzing survey data for the last *13 years!*

Every transplant center has its own way of structuring the work that must be done, and how responsibilities are shared by staff.

- Do you follow your post-transplant patients for more than six months after surgery?
- What is your ratio of transplant nurse coordinators to social workers?
- How do your day-to-day roles, responsibilities and staffing levels compare with your peers?
- Is your salary in line with my peers in my region with a similar level of experience?

Check out the [2022 survey results](#) to learn what your peers are doing, how their work is structured and find out if you're "one of the crowd" or an "outlier".

STSW Survey Results from the past 13 years are accessible on our website, under the Resources / Survey tab. Use them to inform yourself, and if necessary, to advocate for yourself. And when you get an invitation to complete the survey next year, please do so! Your answers will help make the survey more valuable to us all.

## STSW Research Grant Approval

Please join us in congratulating STSW member, **Gloria Chen**, and one of her transplant surgeons, Joel Adler. Their project, "Barriers in Access to Kidney Transplantation in Central Texas (BATCT): Characterizing the role of dialysis social workers study" has just been approved for a \$10,000 grant from STSW to support their research. This project will conduct a survey and qualitative interviews "to understand dialysis social worker perceptions of transplant candidacy and referral, as well as their role in regulatory mandates. We will also identify facilitators and barriers to transplant access in general." Gloria and Dr. Adler will present at a future STSW conference and seek publication of their research project. Congratulations Gloria and her team!

## ► Credentialing Committee

Molly Dugan, Chair

### The Credentialing Committee needs you!

We are seeking credentialed members to join our team of dedicated folks who help review and approve new credential applications. This committee is a great way for you to get involved in the Society and help members achieve their credential goals! Please reach out to me at [credentialing@stsw.org](mailto:credentialing@stsw.org) if you are interested and would like more information!

### Does your credential expire in 2023?

All expiring 2023 credentials expire **on June 1, 2023**. If this is your expiration year, it is time to submit your [application for recertification](#), which you can find on the STSW website along with information about [recertification requirements](#).

Please pay close attention to the criteria for acceptable [transplant-specific CEUs and MCS-specific CEUs](#) (*scroll to bottom of webpage*). For additional MCS CEUs, also see this [page](#) or go to *Practice Area - Mechanical Circulatory Support* on our website.

Note that you must save your attendance certificates and STSW attestation forms, but you are no longer required to submit them with your *recertification* application. (*New credential applicants must submit these forms.*) For *recertification*, you are only required to submit a list of your CEUs with the credit hour(s) received. We will conduct random audits of those lists. For those submitting MCS credits – please specifically indicate which CEUs are specific to MCS.

Be aware that June 1, 2023, is a firm deadline! We look forward to receiving your application for recertification at any point up to and including June 1.

If you have any questions about this process, please direct them to [credentialing@stsw.org](mailto:credentialing@stsw.org).



## ► Mentoring Committee

Alexandra Radomsky, Chair

The STSW Mentor Program currently has *12 active Mentors & 13 active Mentees*. We currently have the capacity to match 4 more Mentees in the areas of adult kidney/pancreas, liver, small bowel, and lung transplant. We are always welcoming interested Mentor candidates and are specifically seeking pediatric social work Mentors! If you are interested in applying, please visit the [Mentor Program's](#) section of the website or send questions to [mentor@stsw.org](mailto:mentor@stsw.org)

Our committee is looking forward to the San Diego conference, where we will once again have a vendor table where transplant social workers can learn more about the Mentor Program. In preparation for the conference, we will also be inviting current & past Mentors and Mentees to share their experience in the Mentor program via video recording. More details to come!



## ► Living Donor Committee

Chrissi White, Chair

Great news for New York! New York Gov. Kathy Hochul signed the New York State Living Donor Support Act. This act will assist donors with costs related to donation for N.Y. residents who donate to a fellow New Yorker.

The living donor committee is continuing to meet quarterly. If you are interested in learning more or would like the information for the next meeting, please email [christine.white@adventhealth.com](mailto:christine.white@adventhealth.com).

Topics are based on the input from the committee. Please note, the day and time of the committee meetings change every quarter to try to accommodate as many members as possible.



### ► Pediatric Committee:

Tina Cole, Chair

Hello Peds friends! My name is **Tina Cole MSW, LISW-S, CCTSW** and I am the Heart Failure/VAD/Transplant Social Worker at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. I am the newly appointed Pediatric Committee Chair and I look forward to working with you all. I am still in the process of completing a doodle poll to find a day/time to meet with everyone. In the meantime, please feel free to join us on the STSW Peds page on Facebook! Please reach out with questions or suggestions. I can be reached at [Tina.Cole@NationwideChildrens.org](mailto:Tina.Cole@NationwideChildrens.org)



### ► Multicultural Committee

Daniela Matz, Chair

Next Multicultural Committee meeting will be May 10<sup>th</sup> at 4 ET. We are discussing ways and ideas to implement cultural awareness in practice.



### ► Liver committee

Vanessa Mulsow, Chair

The Liver Committee has a new Chair! My name is **Vanessa Mulsow**, and I am one of the liver transplant social workers at UC San Diego Health Center for Transplantation in California. **Kelli Swan-Vranish**, the previous chair, has been spearheading this committee for many years and stepped down to focus her attention on being Program Chair for the STSW conference! I am excited to take on

this new role on the STSW Board and know there are big shoes to fill.

This year, we have restarted regular liver committee meetings and it has been great to connect with liver transplant social workers across the country. We have been having interesting conversations in hot topic areas such as reviewing acute alcohol hepatitis protocols across various centers, discussing substance use assessments, and toxicology testing. We are also brainstorming ideas to create remote continuing education opportunities throughout the year which will be beneficial to those who are unable to attend our conference but want to remain connected to our community.

We have decided as a committee to hold meetings every other month and would love it if you would join us! Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions to [vmulsow@health.ucsd.edu](mailto:vmulsow@health.ucsd.edu).



### ► Public Policy and Resource Updates:

Lara Tushla, Chair

### Support Living Donors

[Urge Congress to support the Living Donor Protection Act \(p2a.co\)](#)

We should ensure that living organ donors have access to FMLA protections to take time off of work to donate an organ and recover from surgery without fear of losing their job. If passed, this federal legislation would ensure that every state has a basic level of protection – so a person's address does not become a barrier to becoming a living donor. (Currently different states offer different benefits).

### eGFR Revisions

Transplant centers across the country are working toward implementation of changes in the qualifying date of African American kidney transplant

candidates to address previous race-based listing criteria that incorrectly assessed the level of kidney function. These corrections need to be made by January 2024, although the below lawsuit is a response from patients saying that it should be implemented faster.

[https://roanoke.com/news/state-and-regional/richmonds-organ-transplantation-network-hit-with-class-action-lawsuit/article\\_cd4536e0-d8b8-11ed-9e22-4fa6e3df100e.html](https://roanoke.com/news/state-and-regional/richmonds-organ-transplantation-network-hit-with-class-action-lawsuit/article_cd4536e0-d8b8-11ed-9e22-4fa6e3df100e.html)



### ► Membership Committee:

Sarah Larmore, Chair

Happy Spring everyone! I'm excited to be our newest Membership Chair. Our current membership totals 464 people. Thank you to all those who have renewed your membership, you are valued members of this society! Welcome to our new members as well. We look forward to getting to know you through the forums, committees, mentorship programs and other ways you choose to be involved. You can review the "Member Content" tab on the website for ways to get involved. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any membership questions:

[sarah.larmore@imail.org](mailto:sarah.larmore@imail.org).



### ► Kidney/Pancreas Committee:

Kristen Bennett, Chair

Hello Kidney/Pancreas Social Workers! Our committee has started the year off strong with meetings and great conversations, and we are hoping to expand our core group! I have received feedback on what would make our committee calls useful and what members hope to get out of these calls, and will be working with the committee throughout the year to implement some ideas, such

as complex case discussions, journal article reviews, and increasing collaboration by creating/working on projects.

I have created a distribution list for those on the committee which is used for meeting calendar invites, agendas, and minutes. If you would like to be added to this list, please send me an email ([kbennett6@pennstatehealth.psu.edu](mailto:kbennett6@pennstatehealth.psu.edu)). Our next meeting will be on April 26<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 PM (EST). Meeting dates, times, and links are also on the Kidney/Pancreas [page](#) of STSW's website (under Member Content tab) and posted on the Forum. I hope to see you there!



### ► VAD / MCS Committee:

Kristin Malaer, Chair

The LVAD Committee has many opportunities for growth and development. We continue to have our once-a-month open calls on the *third Friday of the month at 3:00 pm CST*. We also have active sub-groups in the following: best practice, advocacy and disability, and social work education development. If any of these are of interest to you, please reach out to

[Kristin.malaer@memorialhermann.org](mailto:Kristin.malaer@memorialhermann.org).

Be sure to follow [Beats by Social Work Podcast](#) for additional LVAD approved education.



### ► Heart Transplant Committee

Tiffany Coco, Chair

We have some exciting news this month as we have a changing of the guard. I have transitioned into a new social work position which takes me primarily out of direct patient care and now involved in transplant from a macro level and VCA. It has been a privilege to hold this position

for the last 2.5 years. The community of heart transplant social workers is one of a kind and we have so many incredible social workers within our community. To take part in STSW at this level was truly a top career achievement.

With that it is my honor to welcome **Shay Rogillio, LCSW, CCTSW-MCS** as the new Heart Member at Large. Shay has a vast history of working as a Heart Transplant and MCS/LVAD Social Worker in Texas. I have no doubt Shay will do amazing things with this group. I am excited to watch the continued growth and will be close by cheering everyone on and highlighting the organization as I assist STSW embark on a new venture through social media.

The Community of Heart Transplant Social Workers will continue to have monthly virtual calls the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of every month. Please see below for updated call link. Please consider participating in these calls when your schedule allows, we get so much out of these discussions and connections. Recently we spoke about substance use policies and health literacy, cognitive impairments, versus low flow in the context of heart failure.

**\*\*Updated Link for the STSW Heart Committee Monthly Call** (4th Wednesday of every month):

- **Next Call:** Wednesday, April 26 · 1:00 – 2:00pm
- **Time zone:** Central Standard Time
- **Google Meet** joining info **Video call link:**  
<https://meet.google.com/opa-vtky-kam>
- **Or dial:** (US) +1 574-404-3607
- **PIN:** 854 790 053#
- **More phone numbers:** <https://tel.meet/opa-vtky-kam?pin=7258057958955>

• Or join via SIP:

[sip:7258057958955@meet.ascension.org](mailto:sip:7258057958955@meet.ascension.org)

And you can still get a dose of me as I continue to Co-Host the [\*Beats by Social Work Podcast\*](#) with **Kristin Malaer**.

Thanks for the memories,

Tiffany Coco, LCSW, CCTSW-MCS



## ► Lung Transplant Committee

Mike Bielaczyc, Chair

It's been an exciting several for months for the lung committee – in December, we honored the contributions of our former Committee Chair, **Jessica Dutkin**, and wished her well as she transitioned to a new position outside of transplant. I am honored and excited to take on the role of chair. Our membership continues to grow, and we have welcomed the perspectives and insights of several interns at our various centers.

We are continuing with our bimonthly sessions, and our discussions have included exploring the role of palliative care in lung transplant, best practices for transplant caregiver education and verification, and most recently we have spent time learning the new Lung Composite Allocation Score from one of the regulatory managers at our centers. This is a major overhaul of the allocation system, and as social workers it has been a priority for us to understand the changes in order to best support our patient population. The committee looks forward to continuing to support and learn from one another moving forward!

## SPOTLIGHT CORNER

We are delighted to spotlight **Laurie McDonald, LCSW, CCTSW**, who has been an STSW member for 23 years and has made enormous contributions to the STSW Board and STSW membership. Laurie



has recently rotated off the STSW Board, where she most recently held the Past President position. Laurie earned her MSW from Boston University in 1993 and started working in Transplant at University

of North Carolina in 2000. Now working exclusively with lung transplant patients, she has worked with all organ groups (except islet cell), pediatric and adult, since beginning her transplant social work career. She joined STSW in 2000, shortly after starting her transplant job.

Laurie attended her first of *twenty* STSW conferences in Santa Fe in 2001. She recalls: “It was so stimulating and inspiring! I was blown away by the incredible presentations, and by the great group of social workers who had organized it.” Though she has also attended both virtual conferences, she states, “There is so much more to a conference than listening to presentations, stimulating as they usually are. The conversations over lunch and dinner are inspiring and beneficial. We share ideas and practices, and talk through challenges together. And we have so much fun! The energy at an in-person conference is exhilarating!”

Laurie stated that she decided at that first conference that she wanted to be an active participant in the organization. And that she has! In 2002 she joined the STSW Board as Heart Member At Large, after that became STSW Treasurer, and then ran for and became Vice President. As VP she took over as chair of the

Credentialing Committee, and under her leadership STSW launched the CCTSW credential.

And then Laurie became the STSW president, a position she held for 4 years. She states, “Being STSW president really stretched me personally and professionally”. She described being terrified of public speaking, and joining Toastmasters during her VP term to address this phobia, which was so helpful to her. Laurie goes on to say, “Leading the executive board was very rewarding. Such dedicated and talented people step up to share their time and gifts with the Society! Hard work and great collaboration have led to friendships that I will always treasure.” It was during her presidency that she learned how to create STSW’s first online annual STSW survey, and to present the results. Both the STSW credentials and the online survey have been significantly helpful to our profession, and we have Laurie to thank for this.

Besides these two projects, Laurie has made several other significant contributions to STSW. She states, “One of the most rewarding projects I worked on for STSW was creation of the Psychosocial Assessment Tool for Living Donors. Several STSW members across the country collaborated on this tool, comparing our practices and reading the literature to develop a comprehensive tool. A few of us went on to publish a literature review based on this work in *Progress in Transplantation*”. She also worked on a multidisciplinary collaboration along with STSW member **Kay Kendall**, representing STSW on developing a consensus statement, and she and Kay are co-authors of “The 2018 ISHLT/APM/AST/ICCAC/STSW recommendations for the psychosocial evaluation of adult cardiothoracic transplant candidates and candidates for long-term mechanical circulatory

support,” published in *The Journal of Heart and Lung Transplantation*.” Laurie presented both pieces of work at STSW conferences.

And this is all STSW related! Laurie obviously also has a full-time job, for which she participates in other committees and projects! She has served for 3 years on the UNOS Living Donor Committee, regularly attends OPTN Region 11 meetings, has supervised many social work students and colleagues, was transplant social work’s team lead for a few years, and is a member of the transplant department’s diversity council, launching a racial equity challenge group with their social work team.

Is it a wonder that she was awarded the STSW [Judy Midelfort Award](#) in 2006?

And who is Laurie when she is not wearing her transplant social work / STSW hats? Laurie lives with her partner, Tyler Johnson, in Carrboro NC. They have a saltwater aquarium that they enjoy. Her young adult stepson and transgender stepdaughter live nearby, as do her parents, sister and extended family. She has a passionate interest in contra dancing and Irish set dancing, and she loves traveling, especially in the national parks. She plans to retire at the end of 2024 and move to Ireland with Tyler. She is working on getting Irish recognition of her social work license so she can practice for a few years there. She hopes to gain Irish citizenship and looks forward to the adventure of living in Europe.

Of her work with STSW she states, “I have given a lot to STSW, and I have gotten back so much more! It has shaped me as a transplant professional and a leader. It has been the richest experience of my career.” Laurie’s contributions have certainly enriched STSW. We look forward to continued

work with Laurie until her retirement and move to Ireland – and hopefully after that as well!

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## IN THE NEWS

### ➡ HRSA ANNOUNCES ORGAN PROCUREMENT AND TRANSPLANTATION NETWORK MODERNIZATION INITIATIVE

In March, HRSA announced an initiative to introduce reforms into the nation’s organ donation and transplantation system. These reforms would strengthen accountability and transparency in the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN). You can read more about it at these links:

- [HRSA Announces Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network Modernization Initiative | HHS.gov](#)
- [UNOS welcomes competitive bidding process for next OPTN contract](#)



### ➡ VIRGINIA PASSES LAW MANDATING UNPAID ORGAN DONOR LEAVE

In July of this year, Virginia will become one of nearly twenty other states that require employers to provide medical leave for living organ donors. The Virginia law applies to employers with at least 50 employees. Eligible employees will be able to continue to receive health benefits and applicable commissions. Read more about it at <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/virginia-law-mandating-unpaid-organ-donor-leave-goes-effect-july-2023>

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## SUPPORT GROUP LISTINGS

STSW keeps a running list of transplant support groups on our website at [Society for Transplant Social Workers - Education and Support Groups \(wildapricot.org\)](https://www.wildapricot.org). These were last updated in 2021, when many formerly in-person support groups went virtual due to Covid. We are appreciative to the many of you who have sent additional updates, but it is time to look through the list again as information may have changed. Perhaps some groups are even meeting in-person again.

Please take a few minutes to check the listings for your state at the above [link](#) and send any edits, updates, corrections to [help@stsw.org](mailto:help@stsw.org).

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## LOCAL CONFERENCES

Does your community have periodic transplant conferences? Let us know about them. We can post them on our [Education and Trainings](#) page on the website and – if timely – announce them in this newsletter. Also, let us know if you would like us to promote these learning opportunities on our new social media platforms. Send information to [help@stsw.org](mailto:help@stsw.org).

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## SONG OF THE YEAR

On February 5, Bonnie Raitt won a grammy for Song of the Year. “*Just Like That*” was written after she heard a story on the news about a woman who had donated her son’s heart after his death and was about to meet the organ’s recipient for the first time. The song is beautiful and moving. You can hear it at [Bonnie Raitt - Just Like That \(Official Lyric Video\) - Bing video](#).

## APRIL IS NATIONAL DONATE LIFE MONTH

(NDLM) was established by Donate Life America and its partnering organizations in 2003. Observed in April each year, National Donate Life Month helps raise awareness about donation, encourage Americans to register as organ, eye and tissue donors and to honor those that have saved lives through the gift of donation.

For National Donate Life Month (NDLM) 2023, Donate Life America was inspired by the natural world of a pond coming to life in the spring. Frogs (and toads!) are a sign of healing and renewal, and water lilies represent hope. The lily pads we see on the surface of a pond are part of a much larger plant rooted below the water. The water lily plant reminds us of the support and collaboration needed for hope to bloom.



**STSW WISHES YOU HAPPY  
SPRING, AND  
HAPPY NATIONAL DONATE  
LIFE MONTH!**