

# Cell Phones Saving Lives...



## One Heart at a Time.

*Above: Proud of their hard work in collecting cell phones for Project Valentine, the Freshman Forum rally around Kel and Joanne Kelley founders of the Triple Heart Organization.*



by Kim Sheffield



Jacksonville State University alumnus and heart transplant recipient has come up with an innovative way for transplant candidates to get faster help

and information when donated organs become available. And the program got its startup on the JSU campus.

Kel (Class of 1970) and Joanne Kelley, founders of the TripleHeart organization, have been working to collect and distribute old but usable cell phones and battery chargers to the patients in partnership with the Douglas County, GA, Kiwanis Club, GhostNet, Inc. of Jasper, GA, The Freshman Forum of Jacksonville State University, and Cingular Wireless. The TripleHeart organization provides the phones to people waiting for some form of organ transplant. Most of the individuals who are waiting for a transplant are too sick to work and cannot afford a cell phone, so the Kelleys help those people in need. The idea is to give people access to 911 at all times to make the patients' ordeal a little easier.

Kel Kelley is a heart transplant recipient. He had to take the difficult journey, with his wife at his side, of waiting two years before

receiving a donated heart. He and his wife decided to assess the gaps they saw between the patients and their communication with the hospitals. The Kelley's wanted to relieve other people's anxiety over the long wait for an organ.

They started a website -[www.TripleHeart.org](http://www.TripleHeart.org) -to help provide a place on the Internet for all of the transplant recipients and caregivers to communicate with each other.

Beepers are traditionally provided for patients waiting to receive an organ transplant. However, most or all of these services are not free. Many doctors feel a cell phone may also be necessary, in case patients are out of range of the pagers or in dire need. Many times the patients are so sick they need immediate access to 911 in case of emergency.

Donated cell phones with 911 access give patients an extra avenue of communication when their organ becomes available and they are unable to get to the hospital. They can call 911 and an ambulance will be called.

Joanne Kelley, wife and caregiver of Kel Kelley, understands. "These people are really sick. They can be okay one minute and

severely ill the next. The cell phones give them that emergency contact in case they need it -no matter where they are."

There are over 80,000 people looking for organs. The Kelleys say 10 to 12 people die every day waiting for an organ."

"We want to ease the process as much as possible, and net- working is very important. Our hands must be extended to one another."

The TripleHeart.org website provides a lot of background information on the Kelleys and their mission. The website is currently number one on Yahoo and provides communication between people from all over the world. There are so many needs and only so much that can be done. The Kelleys say they just want "to be there and help people, sort of like the movie Pay it Forward, we just want to do what we can to help other people."

Kel Kelley hopes that "TripleHeart will become a nationwide organization. When Joanne and I present this idea elsewhere and get people to collect phones all over, we will make sure that everyone knows the effort began at Jacksonville State University."

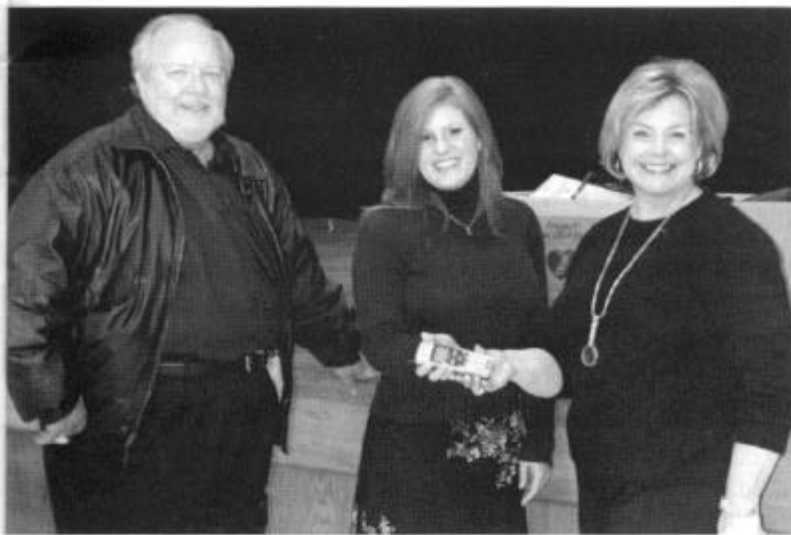
Their Project Valentine -a campus cell phone collection effort -at JSU was highly successful. Students from the Freshman Forum headed the event that supported the TripleHeart organi- zation. The goal was to conduct a phone drive and collect as many phones and chargers as possible. The cell phones will be distributed to those waiting for organ transplants so they may make that life-saving 911 cell phone call for free.

The Freshman Forum donated a total of 107 cell phones (as of March 3) to the campaign. The Freshman Forum has asked that people continue donating phones and chargers to the project.

To contact the Freshman Forum call the office of student activities at 256-782-5491 or call toll free 1-800-231-5291 ext.5491. For more information on TripleHeart visit the website at [www.TripleHeart.org](http://www.TripleHeart.org) or call Kel and Joanne Kelley at 770-920-2324. Kel can also be reached by email at [kelkelley@tripleheart.org](mailto:kelkelley@tripleheart.org).

## Transplant Facts

- The longest a person has survived after heart transplant as of 2002 is 24 years.
- Heart transplant survival rates are now 84.8% at one year, 77.1% at 3 years, and roughly 50% at 10 years after transplant surgery.
- The number of people 65 or older who receive heart transplants is increasing faster than any other age group.
- From 1996 to 1999, heart transplants in the 65-plus age bracket rose 28%.
- Acute heart rejection is more likely to happen when the heart *donor* was female regardless of recipient sex.
- Heart failure is the leading cause of death in most of the developed world. About 730,000 Americans die each year from it.
- In 1998, only 2,345 heart transplants were done in the USA.
- As of December, 1999, there were 4,135 people on the national waiting list for heart transplant, almost double the number who actually had a transplant the year before.
- Average waiting time to transplant is more than 7 months.
- In some parts of the country, as many as 40% of patients die while waiting.
- Pharmaceutical companies tell many of their employees to bring back samples of dirt from any foreign places they visit on vacations. That's because cyclosporine and some other very valuable drugs come from fungus found in dirt from different parts of the world.



(Left to right) Kel Kelley- Megan Cook, and Joanne Kelley happily exchange one of the cell phones donated to Project Valentine.

[www.tripleheart.org](http://www.tripleheart.org)