



A Million Thanks for a Thousand Hearts

A message from Melinda L. Estes, MD, SLHS President and CEO

It was summer 1985. “We Are the World” played from every speaker in earshot, raising millions of dollars for humanitarian aid. And the soon-to-be World Champion Kansas City Royals hadn’t quite yet hit that winning stride that would carry them into the fall.

But for the team at Saint Luke’s Hospital of Kansas City, there was something much bigger than any of that happening. They were celebrating a true and extraordinary second chance for one patient, Sam Harrison of Grandview, Missouri—Saint Luke’s first heart transplant recipient.

Today, 38 years later, we’re celebrating our Saint Luke’s Heart Transplant Team once again for another incredible and rare milestone.



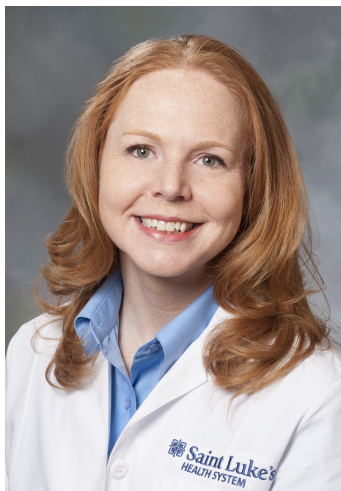
Sam Harrison, with his wife and grandson

We're applauding 999 *more* true and extraordinary second chances like Sam's. And we're honoring the 1,000 donors and donor-families who made each of those second chances possible.

It's an accomplishment only 22 other hospitals in the country can claim, and the reason is easy to understand: it takes the best of the best. It requires a team of the brightest clinical minds, the most skilled surgical hands, and the most compassionate caring hearts. But it also requires a culture of collaboration, a commitment to the mission, and a higher standard of excellence from every person, in every role, and on behalf of every patient.

Because it's not just about the number, it's about the successful outcomes. Like the facts that our patients' 3-year survival rate is 36 percent *better* than the national average, while our waitlist mortality rate is 22 percent *lower*. Or that the overall patient survival rate on Saint Luke's waitlist is 54 percent *higher* compared to what's expected on an average waitlist.

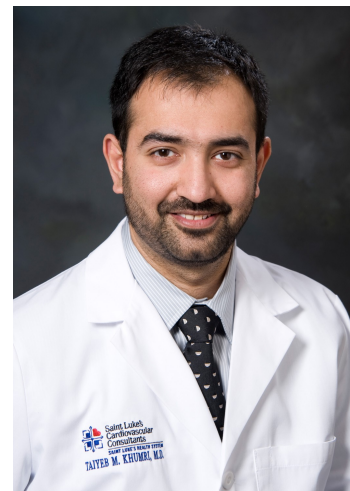
I know our entire System joins together today in congratulating [Andrew Kao, MD](#), Medical Director; [Taiyeb Khumri, MD](#), Associate Medical Director, Cardiac Transplantation; and the entire Saint Luke's Heart Transplant Team for this incredible accomplishment... in sending our renewed best wishes to our 1,000 patients and families throughout the years... in celebrating [Jessica Heimes, DO](#), Surgical Director, Cardiac Transplantation, and the talented surgical team who performed the milestone 1,000th surgery this week... and in offering our heartfelt gratitude to the individual and family who provided the lifesaving donation.



Jessica Heimes, DO



Andrew Kao, MD



Taiyeb Khumri, MD

And we also honor the shoulders we stand on—the pioneers who dared to imagine the unimaginable, and who courageously kept pushing the limits of what was possible, constantly improving the science with every success and setback. We're indebted to them for all they did to shape this critical area of care. And I'm proud to know that our exceptional Heart Transplant Team is paying it forward, with interest, every day.

Years from now, when we've reached a *second* thousand lives saved, we can only imagine how different health care might be, or how far science and technology will have taken us. But we can be sure that at the heart of it all will still be those who serve tirelessly, who give selflessly, and who make miraculous second chances happen. And we will continue to be sincerely grateful for them and all they do.



Precious cargo arrives at Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute early in the morning of Oct. 5: the donor heart ahead of the 1,000th heart transplant. Saint Luke's is deeply grateful to each donor and their loved ones for this gift of a second chance at life.



Members of Saint Luke's Heart Transplant Team the day of the program's 1,000th heart transplant. Thank you to all members of the Saint Luke's team who are involved in every aspect of care for our heart transplant patients throughout their transplant journey.

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