

Gift of Hope Community Foundation Presents Jesse White Leadership Award to UChicago Medicine's Dr. Ashley Suah

Jesse White Leadership Achievement Award presented to Dr. Ashley Suah for dedication to organ donation, transplantation and commitment to access of care.

ITASCA, IL, UNITED STATES, September 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Gift of Hope](#)

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Audrena Spence

[Community Foundation](#) is proud to present the 2026 Jesse White Leadership Achievement Award to Dr. Ashley Suah, transplant surgeon at UChicago Medicine, in recognition of her dedication to organ donation and transplantation, and commitment to advancing equitable access to life-saving care. The award will be presented during the Gift of Hope Community Foundation's 3rd Annual Celebration of Donation [5K Run, Walk & Roll](#) at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, on Sept. 13.

Established in 2018, the Gift of Hope Community Foundation raises funds to support Gift of Hope Organ &

Tissue Donor Network's mission to save and enhance lives through organ and tissue donation.

The Jesse White Leadership Achievement Award honors the legacy of Jesse White, Illinois' 37th Secretary of State, who was a tireless advocate for organ and tissue donation throughout his tenure. His visionary leadership and advocacy were instrumental in raising awareness and increasing donor registrations across Illinois. Recipients of this award embody his spirit by inspiring communities, fostering education and transforming lives through their dedication to organ and tissue donation.

Dr. Suah was selected for her outstanding leadership as a champion for organ donation and transplantation. A nationally recognized transplant surgeon and educator, she is committed to expanding equitable access to life-saving transplantation for Black patients and underserved communities. As one of only 13 Black female transplant surgeons in the United States and one of just two in Illinois, she has distinguished herself through both clinical excellence and a steadfast commitment to addressing disparities in healthcare.

“Dr. Ashley Suah represents the compassion and commitment to service that this award represents,” said Audrena Spence, Executive Director of the Gift of Hope Community Foundation. “Not only has she transformed lives through her work as a transplant surgeon, but she has also become a powerful advocate for health equity and community engagement. Her dedication to empowering patients, mentoring future clinicians and advancing organ donation reflects the values championed by Jesse White. We are honored to recognize her contributions to our community.”

Through her work at UChicago Medicine, Dr. Suah helps patients and families navigate some of the most challenging moments of their lives. She prioritizes patient education, ensuring individuals understand their diagnosis, treatment options and post-transplant care so they can make informed decisions throughout the transplant journey. Her compassionate, patient-centered approach has empowered countless transplant recipients and their loved ones with knowledge, confidence and hope.

Among the many lives she has touched is that of Patrick McDermott, a kidney transplant recipient and Gift of Hope Ambassador and champion for organ donation. As Patrick's transplant surgeon, Dr. Suah played a pivotal role in giving him a second chance at life.

Beyond the operating room, Dr. Suah is deeply committed to mentorship and community engagement. She actively supports the development of medical students and residents, helping to strengthen and diversify the future transplant workforce.

Dr. Suah also serves as a trusted advocate within the community, regularly visiting churches and community centers throughout Chicago's South Side to educate residents about kidney and liver health, disease prevention, organ donation and transplantation. She encourages open dialogue, empowers individuals to ask questions about their health, and helps communities better understand the signs and risks of kidney and liver disease. Through her outreach efforts, she is building trust, increasing awareness and helping improve access to transplantation for Black communities.

The Celebration of Donation 5K Run, Walk & Roll is a community-focused event that raises awareness and funds while honoring donor families and celebrating transplant recipients whose lives have been saved through the generosity of donor heroes. This year, approximately 1,250 participants are expected to take part in the event in support of donation and transplantation.



Dr. Ashley Suah, 2026 Jesse White Leadership Achievement Award

Gift of Hope is again partnering with Fleet Feet for the race, College of DuPage and our media partners WGN-TV and Omni Channel Radio. Additional sponsors include Donate Life Illinois and its partners: The Office of the Illinois Secretary of State, Eversight, Mid-America Transplant, Transplant Life Illinois and the National Kidney Foundation of Illinois as well as Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, Northwestern Medicine and Rush University Medical Center.

The awards presentation will take place immediately following the races on Sept. 13.

To learn more about the Gift of Hope Community Foundation or support its initiatives, visit giftofhope.org/give.

About Gift of Hope Community Foundation

Established in 2018, the Gift of Hope Community Foundation raises funds to support Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network's mission and programs, to save and enhance the lives of as many people as possible through organ and tissue donation. Learn more about the Foundation at giftofhope.org/give.

About Gift of Hope

Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network is the nonprofit organ procurement organization that coordinates organ and tissue donation and provides public education on donation in Illinois and northwest Indiana. As one of 55 organ procurement organizations in the national organ donation system, Gift of Hope works with 180 hospitals and serves 12 million people in its donation service area. Since 1986, its work has saved the lives of more than 30,000 organ transplant recipients and improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of tissue transplant recipients. For more information, visit giftofhope.org.

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