

First UC San Diego Health Honor Walk Pays Tribute to Fire Captain

In the cold and dark hours of an early September morning, a family gathered to grieve around the hospital bed of a loved one. His name was Robin Cervantes. He had recently celebrated his 54th birthday. He was the father of seven and a captain with the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department for nearly 32 years.

Cervantes had been gravely injured in an off-duty accident. Despite every effort from medical staff at UC San Diego Medical Center in Hillcrest, he would not recover. Now he lay there, his life sustained only by machines.

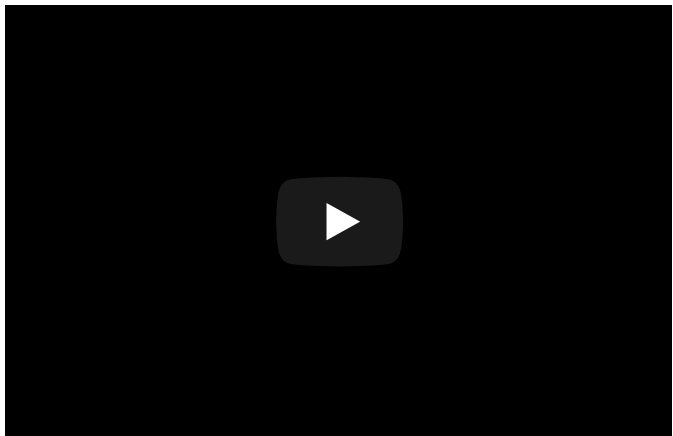
“My family is heartbroken over the loss of my dad,” said Monique Pascucci. “He was the type of person who would help anyone in need. I remember when I was younger, he would pull over to the side of the road and help strangers.”

That generosity proved true again on that morning in September. Cervantes was an organ donor and part of UC San Diego Health’s first Honor Walk. “Although I had many discussions with my dad regarding organ donation, I did not know what the donor process was truly like,” said Pascucci. “My dad saved lives during his career, and knowing he would save more with his passing, helped our family cope with our great loss.”

Beginning in 2019, UC San Diego Health—in partnership with [Lifesharing](#)—a regional nonprofit group that coordinates all organ donations in San Diego and Imperial Counties, began conducting Honor Walks to acknowledge and express deep gratitude for organ donors.



San Diego Fire-Rescue Department Captain Robin Cervantes Photo by San Diego Fire-Rescue Department



“The special event is a tribute to patients who, at the end of their lives, chose to selflessly donate organs with the intention of saving lives,” said Patty Maysent, CEO of UC San Diego Health.

The walks provide family members, like Cervantes’, with an opportunity to accompany their loved one to the operating room before organ donation is made and to share a few last moments together.

As Cervantes’ hospital bed was being wheeled out of the intensive care unit, the weeping of his loved ones was met with a silence from

everyone involved, where so much was said with no words spoken.

“While we were walking next to my dad as he was being wheeled to the operating room, we were overcome with emotion. It was incredibly heavy and devastating. But in that immense moment, we also felt so much support from the medical staff by our side and with everyone present to pay their respects,” said Pascucci.

During Cervantes’ walk, fire department staff lined the hallways. “We all feel strongly that, in some way, he knew we were there supporting him and his family,” said Brent Brainard, captain, San Diego Fire-Rescue. “We are so proud that he gave so many years of service to the residents of San Diego and he continued that legacy with the donation of his organs.”



*Medical staff and San Diego Fire-Rescue Department staff line the hallway at UC San Diego Medical Center as Cervantes’ is wheeled to the operating room.
Photo by UC San Diego Health*

Cervantes donated four organs that day and saved four lives. “There are four people in this world that got to spend one more day with their loved ones because of Robin,” said Maysent. “Many patients remain on the wait list. Everyone should consider becoming an organ and tissue donor like Robin.”

According to Lifesharing:

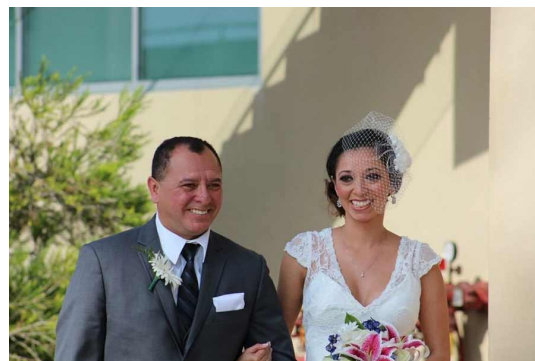
- Approximately 113,000 people are on the transplant waiting list in the United States
- Approximately 2,000 of those people live in San Diego or Imperial Counties
- Locally, Latinos make up the single largest group on the transplant waiting list at 40 percent

Each Honor Walk is signaled by an original chime transmitted through the hospital's overhead system. When the chime plays, all employees—doctors, nurses, care teams and staff—voluntarily line the transit hallway. The chime was composed by Erin Jenkins, a registered nurse at UC San Diego Health. “I wanted to lovingly create the music for all to hear during such a poignant moment. My hope is that every time it plays, it is a reminder to all who hear it of the ultimate gift.”

Directly following each Honor Walk, UC San Diego Health also raises the Donate Life flag for 24 hours to notify the community that an organ donation has occurred.

“All the staff at UC San Diego Health and Lifesharing were amazing to work with. I feel they went above and beyond to guide my family through this process,” said Pascucci. “I am humbled to be part of my dad’s generosity after death. May we all be a little more selfless in times of need.”

Learn how to [become an organ donor](#).



Robin Cervantes and his daughter, Monique Pascucci, on her wedding day. Photo by Monique Pascucci

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