MEDIA RELEASE: THE BILLION STEPS CHALLENGE!

Congratulations to the worldwide transplant community – we smashed our one billion steps goal in only 46 days!

The journey of a billion steps started with just one step. The challenge was set, starting October 5th to walk one billion steps, to the moon and back, in just 10 weeks (70 days). In true champion style, our worldwide transplant community achieved this target in just 46 days, proving that this community truly is “Powered By The Gift of Life!”.

Knowing that every step counts, and with 24 days still left in the challenge, we continued to step together until December 13th, achieving just short of a massive 1.5 Billion Steps overall.

Transplant recipients, living donors, donor families, medical professionals, friends, family and colleagues were all invited to join this free challenge, hosted by the World Transplant Games Federation, and designed to encourage health and fitness, while promoting the message of organ donation and showing that transplantation works.

In total we had 3264 participants from 64 different countries around the globe, making up the astonishing 717 teams. Out in front, Hong Kong and their teams took the lead with the winning team “HKSteps2020” contributing a massive 24 million steps.

The Fit for Life! Billion Steps Challenge, proudly supported by Novartis is an online exercise program designed to encourage transplant recipients and the entire extended community to stay active and celebrate a life where physical activity and movement is the “new” normal. Our challenge sponsor, Novartis, joined the community with their employees making up 98 of the teams and contributing 10% to the overall step count. “Novartis recognised the role exercise can play, by promoting the challenge throughout their workplace. But more importantly, they showed that by working together we can improve health outcomes for patients and the extended community.” Liz Schick, WTGF Honorary Secretary and liver recipient.

The challenge was a resounding success with preliminary results from our survey showing that 88% of participants increased their daily step count by up to and for many, over 5000 steps per day. Two thirds reported that their fitness level improved as a result, and 92% claimed the challenge motivated them to stay active during what has been a difficult and challenging year.

“Covid-19 has created great amounts of stress, fear and anxiety, especially among the “high risk” population, such as transplant recipients. 80% of participants indicated that this challenge had a positive effect on their quality of life. We find comfort in knowing that we can deliver programs which help our community and their extended families, reduce the risk of depression, promote movement and overall improve their feelings of wellbeing”, Chris Thomas, WTGF President.
The challenge was activated using the MoveSpring platform app which allowed participants to sync their fitness devices or manually add their daily steps. It also allowed an option to convert other fitness activities to steps, ensuring all movement counted. You could easily track the progress of your own team, personal achievements, the overall goal and see how other teams and participants were faring in this challenge.

The app created healthy and fun competition between the teams, with various newsfeed and chat forums active, as well as regular messages of encouragement and updates on the leader board status. Weekly fun challenges were set with WTGF branded hoodies up for grabs. “As a community we got to see pictures of everyone’s walks and neighbourhood, share in their favourite recipes, meet their four legged fur babies, experience their creativity and travel the globe “virtually”. I genuinely felt like I was experiencing other people’s countries and cultures, in a time where travel and social interaction has been so challenging.” Colin White, WTGF Trustee and Team Ireland Team Manager.

In the end, 3264 new friends were made. As a result of this challenge, 74% of participants reported that it gave them the opportunity to talk about organ donation and create awareness. We even had people celebrate their decision to become an organ donor as a direct result of participating. “I've never actively thought about organ donation, this challenge inspired me to sign up as an organ donor and ensure I let my family know my wishes.”, Kathy Kahn, participant, South Africa.

As we head into this Festive Season, the World Transplant Games Federation encourages everyone to keep challenging yourself, your friends, family and workmates to stay active. The more we move, the more health benefits we reap! And Remember, whatever physical activity you do, it’s all movement, and it all helps you maintain a healthy body and a healthy mind.

With almost the entire community reporting that they loved this challenge, we will be back with another Billion Steps Challenge in 2021, except this time we may have to make it two Billion Steps?

To find out more about the Billion Steps Challenge and see all final results, please visit https://wtgf.org/billion-steps-challenge

Contacts:
Kim Renyard – Executive Manager
World Transplant Games Federation
Email: kim.renyard@wtgf.org

About the World Transplant Games Federation
The World Transplant Games Federation unites transplant recipients from across the world to promote the success of organ and tissue donation and life-saving transplantation. With more than 70 member countries, the WTGF stages the world’s largest awareness event for transplantation, the Summer World Games, to inspire the public to consider organ and tissue donation. The WTGF also inspires recipients to rehabilitate following their transplant and keep fit and healthy in their ongoing life journey.

About Novartis
Novartis is reimagining medicine to improve and extend people’s lives. As a leading global medicines company, we use innovative science and digital technologies to create transformative treatments in areas of great medical need. In our quest to find new medicines, we consistently rank among the world’s top companies investing in research and development. Novartis products reach nearly 800 million people globally and we are finding innovative ways to expand access to our latest treatments. About 109,000 people of more than 140 nationalities work at Novartis around the world. Find out more at https://www.novartis.com
**3 264 Participants**

**717 Teams**

**64 Countries**

**Group Target Total**

**Total Steps**

1 451 398 796 Steps

**Total Distance**

1 075 110 Kilometres

**Top 5 Steppers**

1. Sui Lung Lai - HKG
   5 515 016 steps

2. Chan Benny - HKG
   5 384 028 steps

3. Tse Kim Wan - HKG
   4 646 606 steps

4. Shiva Sarhadi - IRN
   4 604 375 steps

5. Andrea Draper - GBR
   4 533 115 steps

**Top 5 Teams**

1. HKsteps2020 - HKG
   68 999 step average

2. Wonder rabbits - HKG
   39 046 step average

3. Greece AONM Cycling - GRC
   34 451 step average

4. NOGRAD2020TEAM - HUN
   30 208 step average

5. Dévídék team - HUN
   29 432 step average

**Top 5 Countries**

1. Hong Kong - 162 teams
   460 371 244 steps

2. Hungary - 87 teams
   168 935 133 steps

3. Great Britain - 64 teams
   157 400 046 steps

4. South Africa - 40 teams
   71 377 949 steps

5. Australia - 39 teams
   68 359 011 steps

**Type of Participants**

- 934 Transplant Recipient
- 119 Living Donor/Donor Family
- 489 Health Professional
- 1722 Friends, Family, Colleagues, Other