

Daily Illini

Student organizations raise awareness about need for re-registration

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The University placed first in a statewide competition this past weekend, topping 19 other Illinois colleges and universities on its way to claiming the title.

This competition, though, had nothing to do with athletics, academics, or campus life.

This one was about organ donation.

Donate Life Illinois' "I Am. Are you?" Campus Challenge's goal was to register as many college students as possible as organ donors. The University registered the most organ donors in the month-long challenge.

A statewide poll conducted in 2006 indicated that nearly two-thirds of adults in Illinois were unaware they needed to re-register for Illinois' new organ donor registry, established in January 2006, to be eligible as donors.

"Organ donation is such an important issue," said Jeff Slutz, campus campaign manager for Donate Life Illinois. "We need to get more people registered."

Slutz said he is happy with the amount of awareness that the campaign has created.

"College students are a good audience for us because they're generally supportive of the issue, but they also tend to procrastinate and not register," he said.

"It's difficult for us because there are a variety of groups vying for students' attention, but so far we're really happy with the response we've gotten," he added.

The donor campaign on the University of Illinois campus was facilitated by Students for Organ Donation and the Prospective Students of Medicine, which campaigned on the Main Quad and spoke in some classrooms.

"They're the ones doing most of the grunt work," Slutz said. "We're mainly facilitating."

Lindsey Rivers, president of Students for Organ Donation and senior in AHS, said the motivation for her throughout the campaign was to create awareness of the need for organ donors.

"We really wanted to get people thinking and to start a dialogue about organ donation,"

Rivers said.

She added that the organization has gotten a mixed response from some people.

"There are a lot of people who have heard false things about organ donation and totally ignore us," Rivers said. "But on the other hand, there are a lot of people who have given us a really positive response."

"You'd be amazed at the amount of people we meet whose lives have been touched by organ donation," she said.

"It's really cool to be a part of something that lets you hear so many touching personal stories," Rivers added.

Ryan Carr, president of Prospective Students of Medicine and senior in LAS, cites a lack of knowledge about organ donation as the reason for the mixed response.

"A lot of people who don't sign up do so because they have this false idea that if they're hurt, doctors won't help them," he said.

"There are a lot of misconceptions about organ donation, but when you take those away, a single organ donor can save many, many lives," he added.