

## Donate Life had special reason for bringing effort to McDonald's

By Tony Sapochetti

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NORMAL — “Would you like fries with that?” has become a catch phrase that people who order from McDonald’s know all too well. But an activity this weekend at the McDonald’s at 1535 E. College Ave., Normal, may change that question to help serve an ever-growing cause.

They may ask: Would you like to save a life?

April is National Donate Life Month, and the organization Donate Life Illinois has groups around the state soliciting people to sign up for the state’s donor registry. The McLean County chapter chose the McDonald’s location in memory of someone who helped seven people.

“Dean McLeod lost his life in a car accident in 2005 and donated his organs, which saved five people and restored the sight of two people,” Donate Life Illinois volunteer Moreena Tiede said Saturday at the restaurant.

McLeod, a 16-year-old Ridgeview High School student, was killed in a single-car accident in November 2005. His father, Mark McLeod, manages the College Avenue McDonald’s and agreed to host the event.

This push for donors corresponds to Illinois’ new First-Person Consent Organ/Tissue Donor Registry, which has been around only for a year. Tiede said the new registry includes one major change.

“Most people think that by signing the back of your license, (that) makes you an organ donor, but after you die your family is asked to make the decision all over again,” said Tiede, of Normal.

“A lot of families do not want to have to be in the middle of making that sort of decision,” Tiede said.

She said the new registry gives final say to the person, not his or her family. The group registered 23 people by Saturday afternoon and hoped to have a total of 100 for the weekend.

Most of the volunteers at the event have firsthand experience of how an organ donor can save lives, including Tiede. Her 6-year-old daughter, Annika, needed a liver transplant when she was 12 months old due to a newborn disease. She is now awaiting a second transplant after a post-surgical blood clot.

Norma Gill of Bloomington, another Donate Life Illinois volunteer, wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for a transplant she received.

“I consider my transplant to be a real miracle,” Gill said of the kidney she received almost 13 years ago. “It’s hard for families to look beyond their grief and donate organs, because these organs come from a tragedy, but it’s a wonderful thing for someone to do.”

Meanwhile, the wife of the man from Sandwich who received Dean McLeod’s heart attended

the event and said her husband is living a good life.

"He was wonderful after the transplant," Sheila Sperry said of her husband, John. "He was able to dance at our daughter's wedding, and he's gone back to school now."

Meanwhile, for Mark McLeod, the situation is still bittersweet.

"It's really nice that my son was able to save lives, but unfortunately I'm a member of a group now that I really don't want to be a member of," he said.

### **Signing up**

What: Donate Life Illinois organ donor registration

Where: McDonald's, 1535 E. College Ave., Normal

When: 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday

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**Scott - Donate Life Illinois Campaign Manager** wrote on April 29, 2007 8:02 AM: "There were 6 million people signed up in the state's old registry. Many are still not aware of the need to RE-REGISTER post Jan. 1, 2006 to join the state's new donor registry. 2 million Illinoisans have already taken a moment to re-register and join the new registry. As noted in the article, signing the back of your driver's license is no longer adequate in Illinois, you need to re-register. The new registry will help save hundreds of more lives each year, as previously, nearly 20% of families were overturning an individual's decision to be a donor. For those that can't make it to the event, you can also quickly register online by visiting [www.IAmAreYou.org](http://www.IAmAreYou.org). It only takes a few seconds, but it may mean all the time in the world to someone awaiting a lifesaving transplant. "