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## New law, 5K run kicking it up a notch for organ donors

By Kiyoshi Martinez  
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SPRINGFIELD — When Bobbi and Charles Smith's daughter died, they had to make a decision amid their grief: would they donate her organs and tissue?

"There we were, right there, and had to decide something. So we asked for (donation) arrangements to be made," Charles Smith said.

The Smiths' daughter, Carrie, died in May 2002, when state law required the consent of family for organ and tissue donation to go forward, even if donors had joined the state's registry and signed the back of their driver's licenses.



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Beverly Edwards of Crusader Clinic, who works with the African American Organ and Tissue Donor Network, helps spread the message about the need for people to join donor registries.

### What you can do

To learn more about becoming an organ and tissue donor, visit [www.lifegoeson.com](http://www.lifegoeson.com) to see some frequently asked questions and more about the first-person consent law.

To join the new registry, call 800-210-2106 or visit the Rockford secretary of state facility, 3720 E. State St.

Now, with the state's first-person consent donor list, family members aren't forced to decide about organ donation during a time of grief. The law took effect January 2006.

Under the old system, about 20 percent of family members turned down a request for organ donation, despite a person's desire to be one, said Dave Drucker, spokesman for the secretary of state.

Next of kin decline requests for donation for various reasons.

"One of the biggest things we face are the perpetual myths that are out there," said Scott Meis, campaign manager for Donate Life Illinois.

A common misconception is that a surgical team will let a patient die so the process can

move faster.

"The transplant teams and the medical teams are two totally separate things," Meis said. "Should you pass away, that's when transplantation becomes an option."

Meis also mentioned that for people with religious concerns, many religions support organ donation.

The state's old registry has 6 million people, but the state and other donor advocates are working to increase the numbers of the new, first-person consent database, which has 2 million donors.

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To raise awareness for organ donation, the Smiths organized the annual Red Shoe Run in memory of their daughter. They named the run, which started in 2004, for Carrie's love of red shoes.

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### ***If you go***

***What:*** Red Shoe Run, a 5K competitive run and 1-mile noncompetitive walk

***Why:*** To raise funds and awareness of the need for blood, bone marrow, cornea, organ and tissue donors

***When:*** 8 a.m. Saturday

***Where:*** Rock Valley College Educational Path, 3301 N. Mulford Road, Rockford

***Cost:*** \$18 for advance-registration runners, \$20 on Saturday

***What else:*** It's not too late to register for the run/walk: You can sign up from 4 to 7 tonight at the Rock Valley College gym or beginning at 6:30 a.m. Saturday.

### ***How donation works***

*When a patient dies who is a potential donor, representatives from the Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network go to the hospital with the team that's caring for the patient to approach the family about organ donation.*

*If the person is on the first-person consent list, the staff will answer the family's questions and explain the process. They also will let the family know which organs and tissue are eligible to be donated.*

*After the donation, information is provided to the family on the outcome of the donation, as well as information about the recipient.*

*"A number of families we work with ... choose to write letters to recipients," said Kim McCullough, manager for public relations for donor family services with Gift of Hope.*

*If a person is not on the first-person consent list, then the process is almost the same, McCullough said, except the next of kin will be asked to make the decision on whether the patient will be an organ donor.*