



For Immediate Release
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ILLINOISANS CALLED UPON TO REGISTER AS ORGAN & TISSUE DONORS IN FINAL PUSH TO REACH CAMPAIGN REGISTRATION GOAL

Coalition embarks on "Drive for 3.5" in celebration of National Donate Life Month

CHICAGO – In celebration of April being National Donate Life Month, Donate Life Illinois and Secretary of State Jesse White are urging Illinoisans to take 30 seconds to register in the state's new organ/tissue donor registry and help the 4,700 Illinoisans currently waiting for a lifesaving transplant.

"I am overwhelmed by the number of Illinois residents who commit to saving other people's lives by joining the state's organ and tissue donor program," said White. "This Donate Life Month, I encourage everyone to make sure they join the new registry and help in our effort to give the thousands of people on the transplant waiting list the greatest gift of all – the gift of life."

National Donate Life Month is designated for hosting events at businesses, colleges, hospitals and communities throughout the state to educate the public about organ/tissue donation and encourage donor registration.

This April, Donate Life Month coincides with the completion of Donate Life Illinois' initial 18-month campaign goal of registering 3.5 million Illinoisans in the state's new registry by April 2008. To reach this goal, Donate Life Illinois is leading the "Drive for 3.5," a statewide effort to meet and surpass the campaign's registration goal before the end of the month. Currently, more than 3.2 million residents have joined the new registry.

"Surpassing 3.5 million registrations in just 18 months is a fantastic accomplishment, but there is still more work to be done," said Dave Bosch, chair of Donate Life Illinois. "There were over 6 million people signed up in the state's old donor intent registry which required additional witnesses for you to become a donor. If these people have not registered since January 1, 2006, they need to re-register in the new registry to ensure their wishes as a donor are honored."

As part of the Drive, Bosch will be visiting media outlets in cities throughout the state to address popular myths and misconceptions pertaining to age, health, race, religion and wealth that often prevent people from registering.

Another major component of the Drive will involve members of Donate Life Illinois driving to college campuses throughout Illinois and joining participating student groups in hosting campus and community registration drives.

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Schools with participating student groups include: Augustana College, Bradley University, College of DuPage, DePaul University, Eastern Illinois University, Illinois Wesleyan University, Knox College, Loyola University, Northwestern University, North Central College, North Park University, Northern Illinois University, University of Chicago, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and Western Illinois University.

In conjunction with their campaign efforts, Donate Life Illinois is also running advertisements on the CTA highlighting the fact that it only takes 30 seconds to register online and help save lives. The ads feature donor recipients and supporters who have registered their decision to become lifesaving donors.

More than 300 patients at Illinois' eight transplant centers die each year waiting for organ donations. Illinois established its new "first person consent" donor registry Jan. 1, 2006, to help save more of those lives by ensuring that a person's end-of-life wish to donate is honored and cannot be overridden at the time of death.

Under Illinois' previous "donor intent" registry, additional consent was required from family members or other legal authority for donation to take place. Potential donors' wishes were overridden nearly 20% of the time—had those wishes been carried out, more than 100 lifesaving organ transplants could have taken place each year.

Signing the back of your license no longer makes you a donor in Illinois.

Illinoisans need to join the new donor registry by visiting the Donate Life Illinois' website at www.DonateLifeIllinois.org; visiting any Illinois state driver's license facility; or by calling the Illinois Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Program at 800/210-2106.

To learn more about organ, tissue, eye and blood donation, visit www.DonateLifeIllinois.org or contact Donate Life Illinois at 888/307-DON8 (3668).

About Donate Life Illinois

Donate Life Illinois is the coalition of agencies responsible for organ, tissue, eye and blood donation, as well as donor registration and education in Illinois. It is one of 45 regional coalitions and 50 national businesses or associations making up Donate Life America, a not-for-profit alliance that serves as a national voice and inspires all people to save and enhance lives through organ, eye and tissue donation.

Donate Life Illinois member organizations include:

- American Liver Foundation-Illinois
- Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network
- Heartland Lions Eye Bank
- Illinois Coalition of Community Blood Centers
- Illinois Eye-Bank
- Illinois Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Program
- LifeSource
- Mid-America Transplant Services
- Musculoskeletal Transplant Foundation
- National Kidney Foundation of Illinois
- National Marrow Donor Program

***View social media release and additional online content:**

http://www.grisko.com/downloads/DonateLifeIllinois_Drive.html