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Viridiana's Caring Lives On

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Viridiana Lopez cared about others.

All she ever wanted was to help others, whether it was helping other students at school learn English as a second language or setting a goal to become a famous singer so she could use the money to help kids with no food nor homes.

Viridiana didn't get that opportunity in life.

She was with her family on the way to her brother's soccer practice when they were rear ended by a drunk driver one morning. Viridiana was killed.

"She always said she wanted to help people," said her big brother, Eduardo, from their family home in Morris, where her photos cover the walls and sit framed around their entire living room.

"She wanted to be a singer like Selena, so she could help kids with no food or home," he added.

The family recalls her standing in front of the mirror with her karaoke machine, singing and practicing for her chance to change the lives of others.

The entire family, parents Israel and Lidia, Eduardo and Israel Jr. were with her in the accident that sent all of them to the hospital.

A couple of days later, on Valentine's Day 2004, her parents made the decision to donate her organs to save the lives of others.

"We're happy others are living," said her father, through Eduardo, who translates for him. "We are sad she's gone."

The December before the accident, the family drove to Mexico, where Viridiana sat with her grandmother and mother. She saw her mother's driver's license and saw the markings that indicate she is an organ donor.

After her mother explained what that meant, Eduardo said Viridiana said she, too, would like



Members of Viridiana Lopez's family pose with pictures of the girl, whose organs they donated following a traffic accident in 2004. Her parents, Israel and Lidia Lopez, as well as brothers Eduardo and Israel Jr. were also involved in the accident. (Herald Photo by Heidi Terry-Litchfield)

to be an organ donor.

Eduardo said that, when the family was asked if they would like to donate Viridiana's organs, they remembered the conversation and how she wanted to help people and thought it was the perfect choice for them.

"Many people are surprised that, at her age, she was thinking about it," Eduardo said.

With April being National Donate Life Month, Secretary of State Jesse White ran a commercial promoting organ donor registration statewide all month long. That commercial featured the Lopez family, along with other donor families and recipients.

Viridiana helped save or improve the lives of seven people.

"You never know what might happen. One day you or a family member could be in need of an organ donation," Israel Lopez, Viridiana's father, said. "We believe it is very important to educate others and encourage them to register as donors. Our family does this in memory of our daughter."

Illinoisans can join the organ/tissue donor registry by visiting the Donate Life Illinois' Web site 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.