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Contact: Scott Meis
312-335-0100
773-308-4526 (cell)

ILLINOIS COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES UNITE FOR LIFESAVING COMPETITION IN SUPPORT OF ORGAN & TISSUE DONATION

Inaugural "I Am. Are you?" Campus Challenge Shifts Focus to Lifesaving Registrations

CHICAGO— Having settled in for a fresh school year, college students across Illinois are uniting to take action in support of the 4,700 Illinoisans and 97,000 people nationwide currently in need of lifesaving organ and tissue transplants.

October 1 marks the launch of the inaugural Donate Life Illinois "I Am. Are you?" Campus Challenge – a friendly statewide lifesaving donor registration competition between Illinois colleges and universities. The Challenge was created in response to a statewide poll last year showing nearly half of adults identifying themselves as registered donors are unaware of Illinois' new donor registry, established on January 1, 2006. In addition, nearly two-thirds of adults in Illinois are unaware of the need to **re-register** to join the new registry and ensure their wishes as a donor.

"Our studies and research both on a state and national level have shown that despite college students traditionally being supportive of the issue, they tend to procrastinate in designating their decisions to be donors," said David Bosch, Donate Life Illinois campaign chair and communications director for Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network. "We're seeing excellent response from students getting their schools involved with the Challenge, and it's a testament to the impact that can be made when students are provided with the right tools and information to serve as advocates for the issue."

An array of student groups at different campuses have agreed to help with outreach efforts including Students for Organ Donation chapters, Public Relations Student Society of America chapters, pre-med and nursing student groups, honor societies, and health or community service-oriented organizations.

Though each school's approach to encouraging fellow students, faculty and alumni to register will vary, most groups will host campus and surrounding community registration drives and spread the word online via social networking sites such as Facebook.

"The Challenge is an excellent opportunity to not only register students on our own campus, but begin to connect with groups and organizations from other Illinois colleges to reach students throughout the state," said Vadim Lyuksemburg, president of Loyola University's Students for Organ Donation chapter and state director for Illinois Students for Organ Donation. "Social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace serve as great resources for us to talk about the issue, remind people of the need to re-register and provide a quick link to register online."

Currently, student groups and students from the following colleges and universities have signed on to participate in the Challenge: University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Western Illinois University, Northern Illinois University, Eastern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University (Carbondale), Illinois State University, Illinois Wesleyan University, Loyola University, Illinois Institute of Technology,

North Central College, Illinois Central College, Monmouth College, Benedictine University, College of DuPage, Knox College, DePaul University, Augustana College, Aurora University and University of Illinois at Chicago.

“Most Illinois students are still quick to assume that signing the back of your driver’s license is adequate to ensure your wishes as a donor in Illinois,” said Jeff Slutz, Donate Life Illinois campus campaign manager. “This is no longer the case, and the Challenge will help students realize it only takes 30 seconds to join the new registry and make a lifesaving difference.”

Students, alumni, faculty and all Illinoisans can join the new donor registry by visiting the Donate Life Illinois campaign site at www.IAmAreYou.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. When you register at www.IAmAreYou.org, **remember to type in your school on the online registration form, so your school receives credit toward the Challenge for this lifesaving effort!**

Online Resources

Donate Life Illinois campaign site/registry: www.IAmAreYou.org

Donate Life Illinois online community: <http://www.giftofhope.org/donatelife/online-community.htm>

About Donate Life Illinois

Having launched in January of this year, the Donate Life Illinois campaign is seeing great progress toward its goal of registering 3.5 million residents in the state’s new registry by April 2008 with already over 2.5 million Illinoisans having signed up.

Donate Life Illinois is a 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 Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Program
- Mid-America Transplant Services
- Midwest Eye-Banks and Transplantation Center/Illinois Eye-Bank
- Muskuloskeletal Transplant Foundation
- National Kidney Foundation of Illinois

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