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For Immediate Release

CHICAGOAN TO WALK RED CARPET AT DONATE LIFE HOLLYWOOD FILM FESTIVAL

Local double-lung transplant recipient to be honored

CHICAGO, June 10, 2009 – Chicago native Steve Ferkau, a double-lung transplant recipient, will be walking the red carpet in Hollywood this week at the inaugural Donate Life Hollywood Film Festival. Ferkau recently starred in an online short film, [“The Circle of Life”](#), which placed second in the Festival’s “online shorts” category.

The Donate Life Film Festival debuts Saturday, June 13 at the Directors Guild in Los Angeles, featuring inspiring stories of lives saved through organ donation in television and film, with informative and entertaining panels of screenwriters and surgeons.

Steve’s video celebrates not only his life but also the life of his organ donor, Kari. The video was filmed in Chicago and features Steve telling the story of his transplant experience at various locations including Millennium Park and the John Hancock Center, a particularly meaningful place since Steve and close friends of Kari participate in the “Hustle Up The Hancock” each year in remembrance of Kari. The video was produced by Donate Life Illinois, the statewide coalition of organ and tissue procurement organizations responsible for donor education and registration outreach.

“I wake up every day looking for a new way to tell others about Kari, the power of organ and tissue donation and the special gift of life that she passed along,” said Ferkau. “It’s an honor to be awarded and I hope my message motivates others to consider registering as a donor. It’s a brief decision but one that can ultimately mean a second chance at life for someone else.”

“Donate Life Hollywood created this festival to draw attention to inspiring and dramatic stories in a proactive and positive way and to fill a niche. We knew there were people out there who were producing films and TV shows about the topic, but we were amazed at the response to our call-for-submissions,” said Tenaya Wallace, Donate Life Hollywood campaign director. “It proves that there is enough drama in real life donation and transplant stories without sensationalizing the topic with organs-for-sale and black market storylines.”

Recent research by Dr. Susan Morgan at Purdue University provides evidence that inaccurate storylines about organ donation keep people from registering as donors. More than 102,000 people currently waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant and 18 people dying every day because of a shortage of donated organs, these storylines could literally be costing lives.

In Illinois, residents can help those currently waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant by joining the Illinois organ/tissue donor registry. Illinois residents can visit www.DonateLifeIllinois.org to join the state's donor registry.

Doctors, transplant recipients, donor families, living donors and many from the Hollywood film community will be in attendance at the Festival. "Many people in the entertainment industry have been touched by donation and have come full circle by using their personal experience as a wellspring for their work," said Wallace.

Among the honorees will be "Seven Pounds," released last year starring Will Smith and Rosario Dawson, for "Outstanding Portrayal of Organ and Tissue Donation in a Motion Picture." "Seven Pounds" is the first feature film to show the real-life pain for those waiting for a transplant and the profound joy of receiving the gift of life and sight.

Other film finalists include:

- "Decision to Donate" – the story of one man's battle with chronic kidney disease and his friend's selfless decision to help by donating one of his kidneys. Produced and directed by the donor's son, this film chronicles this life-changing journey from the initial decision to donate, through the transplant and beyond, as the two men and their families share an intimate perspective of their very personal experience.
- "Giving Life" – focuses on the story of Hollie Stanyon Fouts, who became an organ donor as a result of a fatal auto accident just one year after her sister was killed in an auto accident, and their parents' journey through grief and giving.
- "The Wait" – a student documentary chronicling the lives of four young people who are waiting for, or who have received, a transplant. The film shows the graphic realities of life on the waiting list.
- "Prometheus Bound: The Epidemic of Hepatitis C" – the real-life stories of people with Hepatitis C and the effects on the human body.

Eight television episodes will be honored:

- Samantha Who? - "The Job" (ABC)
- Brothers and Sisters - "Just a Sliver" (ABC)
- Grey's Anatomy – "There is No 'I' in Team" (ABC)
- ER – "Life After Death" and "Old Times" (NBC)
- Three Rivers – Pilot episode (CBS)
- The Bonnie Hunt Show
- Corpse Tech (History)

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. For more information: www.DonateLifeIllinois.org.

About Donate Life Hollywood

Donate Life Hollywood is part of the national Donate Life movement harnessing the efforts of the organ and tissue donation and transplant community including transplant centers, organ procurement organizations, tissue and eye banks, and transplant groups.

Donate Life Hollywood serves as a liaison between the organ and tissue donation community and the entertainment industry with the mission of seeing more accurate and inspiring organ donation storylines on television and in film. For more information: www.DonateLifeHollywood.org.