



DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Sign your name, save a life

By: Beth Hackett/Staff Reporter

Posted: 11/9/07

One signature can help save the lives of up to 25 people.

The former Illinois Donor Intent Registry has been replaced by the Donor Consent Registry; which means anyone who was registered as a donor prior to Jan. 1, 2006, must re-register.

The Agency, a student-run public relations organization at Eastern, has helped advertise this change through participation in the [Donate Life Illinois](#) Campus Campaign, since Fall 2006.

During the Agency's most recent effort, which ended Nov. 2, the group re-registered 125 students.

The Campaign organized a competition in which statewide college students competed by encouraging their communities to re-register on the organ donor list.

Eastern tied for seventh place in the competition, tied with Monmouth College, Monmouth.

Jeff Slutz, Donate Life Campaign manager, said the Donate Life Campaign took a poll of college-aged students' thoughts on re-registering.

"Most were supportive but procrastinated with the actual registration, so we wanted to come up with a way to mobilize and make them aware of how important the issue is," he said.

Slutz said there is a shortage of organ and tissue donors, and by signing up, any one person can save lives.

"There are 4,700 who need donors in Illinois and 97,000 nationwide," he said. "It's a critical need and it's [re-registering to be a donor] so easy to do; it literally takes 30 seconds."

The former registry required the signature of the potential donor and a family member or

a legal authority to ensure donation at the signer's time of death.

"Many family members would get upset and not sign off," Slutz said. "So, many lives were lost which could have been otherwise saved."

He said the revised registry ensures the signer's organs will be donated after they sign.

Donors cannot be transferred to the new list even if they previously signed the old registry; they must re-register.

Slutz contacted Katrina Zaret, senior journalism major and member of The Agency, in October of 2006, and when Zaret asked other members of the student publication about joining the cause, the majority wanted to take part.

Zaret said she wanted to take part in the challenge because Donate Life "is an important cause."

"We started it here at Eastern because we wanted to make a difference," she said. "If you can donate a kidney when you pass, that makes all the difference in the world to someone whose life will be saved in the long run."

Heather Korte, sophomore elementary education major, said she thinks the new registry is a positive.

"When kids are 16 most of them make a certain decision because of what their parents did," she said. "Being able to sign it later on helps people like me. I didn't sign up to donate when I was 16 because my dad didn't, and now I have a different outlook on it, so I signed up."

The Agency set up tables on campus to inform students of the issue last year. Slutz used some of the ideas from the Agency to create the Campus Challenge this year.

"We were able to use our PR skills effectively by utilizing newsletters, placing things in The DEN (Daily Eastern News) and commercials on WEIU Radio," Zaret said. "Our results were successful."

Slutz said most students have positively acknowledged the Donate Life Challenge, but it does take some work for people to fully understand the issue.

Zaret said the campaign educated students about organ donation and when students began to realize how easy the process was they were quick to sign up.

Zaret said 20 percent of potential donors' decisions to donate were overturned by their family members.

"With the number of people who need organs and tissue transplants, it's relatively wrong

for you [family members] to take away that person's choice," she said.

Students like Zaret and Korte, who re-registered, said the process was simple and they decided to spread the word.

Korte received sign-up cards through the campaign on campus and brought them home for her family to fill out.

She said even though she has not been personally affected by an organ donation situation, she still understands the importance.

"I don't think people understand how much it helps," Korte said. "I see that even if a family has lost someone, they know that they can help others out."

Slutz said the initial goal of the campaign was to re-register 3.5 million Illinois residents.

"So far we have 2.7 million, so we are well on our way," he said. "It's an easy way to make a positive impact and we are really stressing (the fact that) even though the competition is over, there are always people in need, and others should be registering."

Registration forms are available at the Donate Life Illinois [Web site](#) or you can go to your local DMV.