

End anxious wait for life-saving organ

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When you are 13 years old, you should be waiting for the next great thing to happen. A fun get-together with friends or family. Praise from a teacher, or coach, for a job well done. Going to the movies, or watching the next episode of a favorite television show.

Yet for 13-year-old Eduardo Montoya of Roselle, it has been a long, scary and painful wait for something that would keep him alive -- a donated heart to replace the one that has ailed him for many years.

But all this anxious anticipation, which had started in October 2006, did end with a great thing happening to Eduardo. He got a new, healthy heart. It was transplanted last week.

Eduardo is one of the lucky ones. He was one of 97 patients in Illinois waiting for a heart transplant.

Altogether, there are almost 5,000 people in the state who need an organ transplant.

They are hoping the day will come when their wait on the transplant list is over. They are counting on us to make that happen.

The good news is that millions of Illinois residents have signed up to be organ donors. But the number of people needing donations is rising much faster than the number of available donors.

It is critical that more people agree to be organ donors.

Those who have signed up to donate organs also need to make sure that they are on the most current list.

On Jan. 1, 2006, Illinois launched a new donor consent registry. This change assured that those who agreed to donate organs could not have their wishes altered by relatives, well-meaning or otherwise, at the time of death. A person's decision to donate is now legally binding.

This also means that anyone who registered to be an organ donor before Jan. 1, 2006, must do so again to be covered under the new law.

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White, who has been a leader in persuading people to donate organs, is urging new people to sign up, and reminding those who have put their names on the list to make sure their registration is current. Scores of volunteers will be emphasizing this message throughout April, which has been designated Donate Life! Organ and Tissue Donor Month.

It is easy to donate, or to update your registration. You can do so by going to www.LifeGoesOn.com, or by calling the Illinois Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Program at (800) 210-2106. You can also sign up at any Illinois state driver's facility.

When most of us get sick, we just wait until we get better, and a few days later we're fine. But those who need a transplant can be just a few days from death, unless that new organ is found right away. Help them get it, by being a donor.