

DailySouthtown

LETTERS

Organ donors may need to re-register

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By Jerry Anderson

I am writing to commend Stephanie Gehring on her May 30 article, "It was a miracle." In her article, Gehring calls attention to the powerful human impact that can result from organ and tissue donation.

Alex Medina's liver transplant is a prime example of the importance of taking a moment to make the selfless decision to register as an organ donor.

In light of Alex's lifesaving gift, I would like to call attention to the larger matter of the status of organ donation in Illinois. There are currently more than 4,700 Illinois residents awaiting lifesaving transplants. Like the 17-year-old boy who helped Alex, all Illinois residents have the opportunity to help those waiting for a transplant by simply registering to become organ and tissue donors.

I encourage your readers inspired by Alex's story to take this opportunity to register. It truly does help and save thousands of lives.

It is quite easy to join Illinois' Organ/Tissue Donor Registry, managed through the office of Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White. It is important to make sure you have registered since Jan. 1, 2006 -- when a new state law established a new donor registry that, unlike the old one, ensures your wishes to donate will be honored.

Through a statewide poll, we recently learned that many Illinoisans are unaware they need to re-register. Nearly 90 percent of Illinoisans agreed that signing up for donation was "the right thing to do," but only 40 percent had actually registered. Fewer still were aware of the new registry and the need to re-register.

Please take 30 seconds today to do so. You can access the new registry at IAMAreYou.org. It could be the most important moment of your day -- and, someday, someone else's life. Just ask Alex.

Jerry Anderson is president and CEO of the Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network of Elmhurst, the federally designated not-for-profit organ procurement organization responsible for coordinating organ and tissue donation in the northern three-quarters of Illinois and northwest Indiana.