



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **ILLINOISANS CALLED TO OBSERVE NATIONAL DONATE LIFE MONTH: JOIN NEW ORGAN/TISSUE DONOR REGISTRY**

***Signing back of license no longer adequate—many still unaware  
they need to re-register to ensure wishes will be honored***

CHICAGO- As the number of Illinois patients in need of lifesaving organ transplants surpasses 4,700 for the first time, Donate Life Illinois and Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White encourage everyone to take 30 seconds during National Donate Life Month in April to register as organ/tissue donors and offer those patients a second chance at life.

National Donate Life Month is designated for hosting events at businesses, colleges, hospitals and communities throughout the state to educate the public about organ/tissue donation and encourage donor registration. White, whose office manages the state organ/tissue donor registry, will join organ/tissue donation officials, donor family members, transplant patients and donation advocates at press conferences and donor registration drives throughout Illinois in an effort to encourage people to sign up in the new registry.

"I personally thank the nearly 2 million Illinoisans who have responded to the call to save and help lives by registering as organ and tissue donors," White said. "Yet, there is more we can do. During National Donate Life Month, I urge everyone to make sure they have re-registered and join us in our campaign to help the thousands of men, women and children waiting for someone to save their life through donation."

Donate Life Illinois is a coalition of donation-related agencies leading a campaign to register 3.5 million Illinoisans in the new organ/tissue donor registry by April 2008. The campaign is part of a national effort through Donate Life America to increase to 100 million the number of Americans who have designated donation decisions.

"Most Illinois residents are still unaware of the new registry and the fact that anyone who signed up to be a donor prior to January 1, 2006 needs to re-register," said Dave Bosch, president of Donate Life America and chair of the Illinois campaign. "It literally takes 30 seconds online, and the difference could mean a second chance at life for someone else."

"If every person in Illinois who believes registering is the right thing to do took a moment to do just that, we would make tremendous progress toward eliminating deaths on the transplant waiting list," said Bosch, who is also communications director for Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, one of the two federally designated not-for-profit agencies that coordinate organ donation in Illinois. Mid-America Transplant Services, based in St. Louis and responsible for southern Illinois, is the other.

More than 300 patients at Illinois' eight transplant centers die each year waiting for organ donations. Illinois established its new "first person consent" donor registry Jan. 1, 2006, to help save more of those lives by ensuring that a person's end-of-life registered wishes to donate are honored and cannot be overridden at the time of death.

(MORE)

Under Illinois' previous "donor intent" registry, additional consent was required from family members or other legal authority for donation to take place. Potential donors' wishes were overridden nearly 20% of the time—had those wishes been carried out, more than 100 lifesaving organ transplants could have taken place each year.

The 6 million Illinoisans in the old registry could not be transferred to the new registry, which is why previously registered donors need to re-register. Currently, more than 1.8 million people have joined the new registry, and Donate Life Illinois anticipates Illinois will reach the 2 million mark by the end of National Donate Life Month.

A recent poll commissioned by Gift of Hope showed that 87% of Illinoisans believe registering to be a donor is the right thing to do. Yet, 40% say they have not registered. In addition, of adults who identify themselves as registered donors, nearly half are unaware of the new donor registry and nearly two-thirds are unaware of the need to re-register.

***Signing the back of your license no longer makes you a donor in Illinois.*** Illinoisans need to join the new donor registry by visiting the Donate Life Illinois campaign site at [www.IAmAreYou.org](http://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.

To learn more about organ, tissue, eye and blood donation, visit [www.IAmAreYou.org](http://www.IAmAreYou.org) and click on "Partners," or contact Donate Life Illinois at 888/307-DON8 (3668).

### **About Donate Life Illinois**

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
- 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
- National Marrow Donor Program.

To learn more, visit [www.IAmAreYou.org](http://www.IAmAreYou.org) or call 888/307-DON8 (3668).

Join the online community!

Donate Life Illinois Blog: <http://iam-areyou.blogspot.com/>

Donate Life Illinois on MySpace: <http://www.myspace.com/donatelifellinois>

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