

## Urbana hospitals will use flags to recognize gifts of life

By [Debra Pressey](#)

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URBANA – How do you honor somebody for saving a life?

Provena Covenant Medical Center plans to pay tribute by flying a white Donate Life flag outside the hospital each time an organ, eye or tissue has been donated by a Covenant patient who has died.

Those donations can potentially save the lives of sick people across the U.S. who are waiting on transplant operations.

An inaugural flag-raising and public ceremony has been set for 11:30 a.m. Friday. Attendees can also register to become organ, eye or tissue donors.

Following the ceremony, the flag will be raised for each organ donor and will remain flying for three days, according to Covenant spokesman Trent Pellman.

The flag will fly on a tall pole by Covenant's American flag, and should be visible from University Avenue, he said.

Covenant is the first of the two Urbana hospitals to participate in Flags Across America, an initiative of Donate Life America.

Carle Foundation Hospital is also making plans to participate at a later date. Carle plans to drape the flag on the front of the information desk in the main lobby, where more than 2,500 people pass on any weekday, said hospital spokeswoman Gretchen Robbins.

Becky Ames, coordinator for Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, said most families of organ donors want to be present for the flag raising and appreciate having their loved ones' organ donations honored in this way.

"It's another way to show that family what a great gift it is and how much everybody appreciates that gift that they're giving," she said.

At Covenant, each donor's family will receive a small replica of the flag as a keepsake, Pellman said.

Ames said hospitals that choose to fly a flag for organ donors also help spread awareness of the need for donors throughout their communities.

More donors are desperately needed to give hope to the more than 100,000 people across America – 4,700 of them in Illinois – who are awaiting transplants, Ames said.

Every 11 minutes, a new name is added to the waiting list, and an average of 18 people a day die waiting, according to Gift of Hope.

Covenant had three organ donors and eight tissue donors last year.

There were 13 organ donors and eight tissue donors at Carle last year.

Ames said the number of organ donors tends to be higher at hospitals receiving more patients with irreversible injuries.

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