

Students racing to recruit organ donors

By [Debra Pressey](#)

Saturday October 25, 2008

URBANA – Thousands of people in Illinois are waiting hopefully for organ donors to come along and help save their lives.

Erin Kasper and some fellow students at the University of Illinois are working to find those potential donors, and they need the community's help.

The UI chapter of Students for Organ Donation, of which Kasper is president, is competing with similar groups on other Illinois college campuses to see which one can register the most organ donors by Nov. 14.

A junior majoring in community health, Kasper said she developed an interest in organ donation when she wrote a speech about it for a class in high school.

For her, signing up to become an organ donor has seemed like the logical thing to do ever since.

"I thought, why wouldn't anyone want to do this," she said.

But not everyone does, and Kasper believes some people shy away from becoming donors because they have misconceptions about what's involved.

"I urge people to go to the Web site (www.donatelifellinois.org) and learn the facts," Kasper said.

Donors can also designate the UI student group as the one to receive credit for their registration via that Web site, she said.

Some people with every intention of being a donor also think they have only to sign the back of their driver's license to ensure their wishes are carried out, according to Diane Eikenberry, Donate Life Illinois campus campaign manager. They don't know that a change in the law that went into effect Jan. 1, 2006, requires all Illinoisans intending to be organ donors also to join the state's first-person consent registry, she said.

It takes less than a minute to take care of this online, Kasper said.

Donate Life Illinois, a coalition of agencies dealing with organ, tissue, eye, blood and marrow donation and donor education, hopes to register 5 million state residents by April 1.

Students at 18 colleges and universities in Illinois, including the UI, are working collectively to get 3,000 donors registered during the six-week competition that got under way last month.

Kasper said her group has only five to 10 members, so those students are confining their registration drive largely to the campus area. But she hopes the rest of the community will take the time to go the Web site and register.

Other ways to register:

- Go to any state driver's license facility and register in person.
- Call the Secretary of State organ/tissue donor program at 1-800-210-2106.

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