

NIU in 2nd place for 'I Am. Are You? Illinois Campus Challenge' organ donation registry

By **BRETT MICHELSON**

Today is the last day to get involved in the "I Am. Are You? Illinois Campus Challenge."

The campus challenge, which involves 20 Illinois colleges competing to get the most students signed up for the new organ donation registry, is a small part of the Donate Life Illinois campaign. Donate Life encourages people in Illinois to become organ donors.

"Becoming an organ donor is simple," said David Bosch, communications director at Gift of Hope. "All someone has to do is go to www.iamareyou.org and they can get completely registered online."

Many students and faculty have decided to become donors, pushing NIU to second place in the challenge.

"I'm an organ donor myself; working as a nurse and seeing those in need around me guided me toward my decision," said Virginia Cassidy, associate vice provost for the Academic Planning and Development Department.

The decision to become an organ donor often appeals to people on a sympathetic level.

"What made me become an organ donor was picturing myself being in the shoes of someone who needed an organ," said freshman biology major Abi Rutzky.

While people have plenty of time to make their decision to be a donor, those waiting for an organ often do not share this luxury.

"There's a lot of people in need of organs; Illinois alone has 4,700 on the waiting list and the national waiting list is reaching 100,000 people," Bosch said.

Every organ donor can potentially have a big impact on many lives.

"When one person becomes an organ donor they can save up to eight lives, and if they become an organ and tissue donor then one life can save up to 25," Bosch said.

Among the colleges competing, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is first, NIU is second, and DePaul is third.

"So far 1,755 Illinois college students have signed up to the new registry and feel we'll reach our 2,000 student registry goal by the Nov. 2 deadline," Bosch said.

Today may be the deadline for the "I Am. Are You? Campus Challenge," but it is never too late to be an organ donor.