

SOUTHTOWNSTAR

Be someone's hero- register to donate

April 16, 2008

I would like to take a moment to call attention to Carole Sharwarko's April 7 article, "Woman says receiving lung transplant is like being reborn."

Sharwarko wrote about Oak Forest lung transplant recipient Judy Emmart, who has been given a second chance at life thanks to a selfless donor. As a fellow lung transplant recipient, I empathize with Emmart's story. Through the gift of transplantation, Emmart now has the ability to live her life to the fullest, probably something she once never imagined.

I have a second connection to this story. Eight years ago on April 8, when she worked at Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood, my beautiful procurement nurse, Michele Martin, flew out to Iowa to pick up my lungs.

With April as National Donate Life Month, I remind all Illinois residents of the ever-increasing need for organ donor registrations as more than 4,700 Illinois residents and 98,000 people nationwide continue to wait for their gift of life.

As an Illinois resident, you may still assume that signing the back of your driver's license makes you an organ donor. This no longer is adequate. Take a moment to reregister if you haven't since Jan. 1, 2006. That is when state law established the donor consent registry that, unlike the old donor intent registry, ensures your wishes to donate will be honored.

You can quickly access the donor consent registry and take 30 seconds to register at www.donatelifellinois.org. It will only take a moment, but if it weren't for people like my beloved donor or someone like you, neither Emmart, myself nor thousands of others would have the freedom, happiness and quality of life we have today.

Be someone's hero in the future - register today.

Steve Ferkau

Chicago