



Local

## Secretary of State urges organ and tissue donation

By Becky Malkovich, The Southern

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MOUNT VERNON - With his wide open grin and spontaneous shouts of "thank you," Emery Bock delighted the gathered crowd - and brought very close to home the difference a donation can make.

Bock, 3, was one of the guests lined up with Secretary of State Jesse White Wednesday as White visited the Mount Vernon campus of St. Mary's Good Samaritan Inc. to promote organ and tissue donation during April, National Donate Life! Month.

Bock occasionally squirmed happily in his mother Andrea's arms as she shared the story of his birth, medical complications and subsequent double lung transplant.

"The doctors called us in and told us to prepare ourselves for a rough weekend of sadness. I don't think anyone knew a miracle would occur just hours later when we got our call. I remember the night Emery received his lungs so clearly. I had an overwhelming feeling of peace, but also was very sad for the family who had just lost so much," she said. "I cannot imagine the pain and heartache that our donor family must feel. Not a day goes by that I don't think of that child and that family."

Bock, an Ashley resident, said her son has had his share of complications but he has been able to overcome the challenges.

"He is now energetic and doing things that I never allowed myself to imagine three years ago," she said. "With his three older sisters there is never ever a dull moment. They have painted his fingernails and toenails, dressed him in a frilly dress and made many messes that I can't wait to clean up."

John and Betty Riley of Dix shared the story of a hero - their 10-year-old son, John, who became a donor Oct. 28, 1994, a day after he was struck by a car.

The couple was angered when they were first approached about organ donation, Betty Riley said. "But he was such a unique child," she said. "The first week of school, I was having to buy crayons so often I thought he must be eating them. Come to find out, he was giving all of his classmates who didn't have crayons a box of crayons. That's just

how he was - always giving, always caring for somebody else. We decided if the test results came back and there was no brain activity, that's what we would do, what he would want us to do."

As a result of their son's donations, two people received kidney transplants; a 20-month-old boy got a new liver; a 16-year-old got a new heart and two people gained sight from his corneas.

John Riley said he remembered hearing a definition of hero as "an ordinary person doing extraordinary things. John was a hero."

Almost 5,000 people in the state are on organ transplant waiting lists, White said.

"One person can provide life or improve the quality of life for 25 individuals," White said. "When you can give of your body, your organs, your tissue parts to improve the quality of life or to give life to another human being, you fall into the category of being a hero."

White encouraged people to register with the First-Person Consent Organ/Tissue Donor Registry that makes a person's wishes to be a donor legally binding. People who signed up with the old registry are asked to join the new registry, which was created in January 2006.

White also commended St. Mary's Good Samaritan Inc. for its commitment to organ and tissue donation and to the Life Goes On program and its Southern Illinois volunteers.

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## DETAILS

To register with the Illinois Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Program:

Visit [www.LifeGoesOn.com](http://www.LifeGoesOn.com)

Call (800)210-2106

Visit any Illinois driver's license facility

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