



Give a Life

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Back in June Willamina Clayton's parents learned time with their baby girl could be cut short by liver cancer. An organ donor will soon give their daughter new strength. "Not only does it give hope to a family, it gives life to a family," said Katie Clayton of transplants. "It gives a mother back to her children, it gives a husband back to his wife and a daughter back to her family." She and her husband know this firsthand and they want others to benefit. "There are folks who sit on those lists for months," said Will. "Years sometimes...just waiting for the phone call." "If there's a blessing out of this it's that she is going to get a liver," said Katie. "Either she'll have someone donate or we've got the surgery date set up for where I'll donate for her."

But that comes with risks. It's one reason why Illinois' Secretary of State is urging people to sign up to be donors. About one in 20 Americans will need some type of medical tissue transplant during their lifetime and up to 25 people can benefit from a single donor. "The opportunity to change somebody else's life in the midst of tragedy, that's a no-brainer for me," said Will. "It's a no-brainer." Because one look at Willamina back at home again makes her parents' gift of life one to last. "She just had her first birthday and we want to see her have the opportunity to have 90 plus more," said Will with a smile. "I'm optimistic."

The Clayton's hope their daughter's story encourages others to help. Right now about 5,000 people in Illinois are on the waiting list for transplants. Back in 2006, Illinois started a new organ-tissue donor registry. You no longer just sign off as a donor on the back of your license. Now your decision is legally binding and you can sign up at the DMV or online.