

# Life Goes On

Secretary of State Jesse White • Spring 2011

A newsletter for Secretary of State facility employees and other organ/tissue donation advocates

## April is National Donate Life Month

During Donate Life Month we step up our efforts to educate people about organ/tissue donation. We want individuals to base their donor decisions on facts, not on "what they've always heard" about donation. Accurate information dispels popular donor myths and misconceptions.

When deciding whether to be a donor, people should keep in mind the most important consideration: they will be saving lives — lives that depend on the generosity of donors. One person's decision to be a donor can impact as many as 25 lives.

Our office's April Donor Month public service announcement features a young lady, Mikahla Thornton, who bravely faced a heart transplant at age 9. Now a teenager, Mikahla has demonstrated the miracle of transplantation and is an avid spokesperson for donation.

Featured in this issue are stories about several young people who have faced transplantation with bravery: 11-year-old Isaac Phipps received a new heart as a baby; 17-year-old Noah Bickett received a heart as an infant; and a truly heroic 19-year-old donor, Ryan Landers, helped make a better life for more than 60 people. In addition, we showcase a story about the very first Organ Donor Poster Contest winner in 1992. We thank each of these individuals for sharing their journey with us and look forward to a spirited Donor Month campaign.

*Jesse White*  
Jesse White  
Secretary of State

The Secretary of State's office will be participating in many events around the state in April to showcase the importance of donation and the success of transplantation. Many events are aimed at registering individuals who may not have thought about donation in the past or who have not renewed their donor decision in a few years. Getting the word out about donor success stories is key to public education surrounding donation. Very simply put, transplantation does work and it does save lives.

The Secretary of State's donor public service announcement debuting in April features 13-year-old heart recipient Mikahla Thornton of Bloomington. Mikahla is a very active young lady who received her heart transplant four years ago when she was just 9 years old. Born with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, her family knew that she would one day need a heart transplant to live. By the age of 3, she was in heart failure, and by the age of 9, a heart transplant was her only option. On April 5, 2007, hope for a better life became a reality for Mikahla and her family when she received a new heart through the generosity of an organ donor. Just a few short months later, Mikahla was back home and finally living a healthy life. She could be spotted volunteering at organ/tissue donor registries throughout central Illinois.

On her one-year transplant anniversary, Mikahla and her friends organized a donor

drive in front of her town's Wal-Mart, where they signed up donors and face-painted organ donor ribbons for kids. Recently, Mikahla was one of the featured speakers at the Peoria *Sing For Life* cele-

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**"Thanks to a donor, these children can see a bright future ahead. You can help others too."**

- Jesse White, Illinois Secretary of State

Restore sight. Change lives forever. Join the Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry today. [www.LifeGoesOn.com](http://www.LifeGoesOn.com)

Life Goes On  
ILLINOIS EYE-BANK  
DEDICATED TO THE RESTORATION OF SIGHT  
DONATE LIFE Illinois

Secretary of State Jesse White is surrounded by young cornea recipients in a poster sponsored by the Illinois Eye-Bank in recognition of National Eye Donor Month in March. See page 2 for more information.

- It's easy to join the Organ/Tissue Donor Registry:**
- Visit [www.LifeGoesOn.com](http://www.LifeGoesOn.com) (it only takes 60 seconds to register online).
  - Visit any Driver Services facility and say "yes" to the donor question.
  - Call the Organ/Tissue Donor Program hotline at 800-210-2106.
  - Complete and mail the registration card on the "It's Up To YOU" brochure.

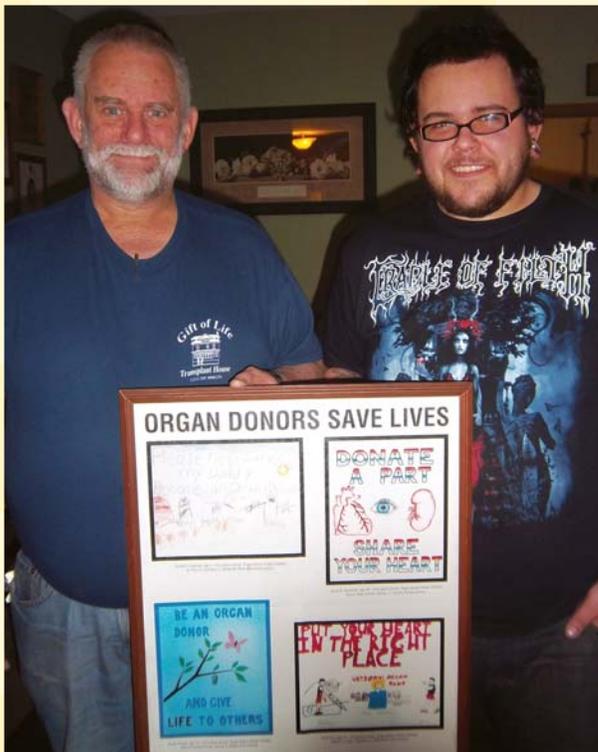
## Where are they now?

### Winner of the first donor poster contest

This story had two purposes. The first was to satisfy our curiosity about a boy who submitted a poster for the first donor poster contest 20 years ago. The second was to find out about his dad, who at the time was on the waiting list for a liver transplant.

When the first Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Poster Contest entries began to arrive back in 1991, it was exciting to see not only the posters but also how the students perceived the then

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Joseph Kralicek, right, and his father, Joe, hold Joseph's winning entry in the first Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Poster Contest held in 1991.



Joseph's winning poster entry with the message: "Please help save my Daddy. Become an Organ Donor."

## Donate Life Month (continued from page 1)

bration for National Donor Sabbath. She brought the congregation to their feet with her moving speech. Mikahla volunteers at community events and donor registration tables, where she continues to inspire people with her donor story. She's a teen on a mission to save lives through the miracle of organ donation.



Heart recipient Mikahla Thornton and Brittney Payton, daughter of the late Chicago Bears running back Walter Payton, are featured in the Secretary of State's donor commercial debuting in April.

Look for donor events in your community in April and help spread the word that donation does save lives.



Mikahla Thornton (front right) is surrounded by family and friends at Peoria's "Sing For Life" National Donor Sabbath celebration last November.

## National Eye Donor Month in March

The Illinois Eye-Bank sponsored a statewide public awareness campaign in March to bring attention to the gift of sight made possible by cornea donation. The campaign included a poster featuring Secretary of State Jesse White surrounded by young cornea recipients (see front page), which was displayed in Driver Services facilities across the state.

The cornea is the clear, dime-sized tissue found at the front of the eye. It functions like a window, allowing light to pass through. A cornea transplant replaces a diseased or infected cornea with a healthy donated one. Corneal transplantation is the most frequently performed transplant procedure. The waiting list for corneas has been virtually eliminated in the United States thanks to advanced surgery scheduling processes and the advent of corneal tissue preservation methods.

LIFE GOES ON

## Donation, transplantation touches young lives

**Noah Bickett, Princeton** – At just 3 months old, Noah received a miraculous heart transplant. Today, the 17-year-old may need another heart transplant. With Noah's recent cancer diagnosis, however, he is unable to receive a transplant until he is cancer-free. A community event in Princeton raised awareness of Noah's medical condition and lent hope to his family that he can successfully battle his cancer and receive a second heart transplant.



Heart recipient Noah Bickett and liver recipient Tina Klingenberg at a donor event for Bickett in Princeton.



Bureau County Coroner Janice Wamhoff (right) signs up Debra Cooper for the donor registry at a community event benefiting Noah Bickett.

**Jay and Pat Landers** – Nineteen-year-old donor Ryan Landers, the son of Jay and Pat Landers of Springfield, gave the ultimate gift of a better life to 61 people in 12 states and Korea with donated organs and tissues when he tragically died in an auto accident. The Landers had not talked about donation with Ryan until he expressed his wish to them to be a donor someday. Pat and Jay are now part of the Springfield Life Goes On Committee that promotes donor awareness in the area. We thank the Landers, and especially Ryan, for making the donor decision.

**Isaac Phipps** – Isaac Phipps of Pittsburg, IL, hardly remembers a time when he didn't have a new heart – he received it when he was just 1 year old. Now a healthy 11-year-old, Isaac recently celebrated his 10th transplant anniversary with friends, family and community members. A very happy and healthy life to Isaac!



Jay and Pat Landers, donor parents.



Isaac Phipps with his parents Ben and Melissa.

## Employee Connection



Anthony Hatchett

For Loretta Hatchett, an employee at the Libertyville Driver Services facility for nearly seven years, transplantation became a reality within her own family. Familiar with people saying "yes"

to donation at her facility, Loretta knew what organ/tissue donation meant to others, but she soon experienced it herself when her husband, Anthony, received a kidney transplant last September.

After years of chronic kidney disease, Anthony knew he needed a kidney in order to continue living. Family members were tested but no one was a match for him. So he began the process of dialysis and was placed on the national waiting list. After three years of waiting for a lifesaving kidney, a donor match was found.

"Someone I never met saved my life because they chose to become an organ donor," said Anthony. Loretta and Anthony are both grateful every day for Anthony's gift of life.

## Donor staff welcomes new Springfield office manager

A warm welcome to Karen Kohnke, the new Springfield Donor Program office manager. Karen previously worked in Special Plates and Intergovernmental Affairs for the Secretary of State's office. In addition to her main role of helping manage the Springfield office she will also be helping out in the field with donor awareness events. Karen can be reached at 217-782-6258, [kkohnke@ilsos.net](mailto:kkohnke@ilsos.net). Please contact her with any donor questions you may have.

**N. BE AN ORGAN/TISSUE DONOR.**

## Where are they now? (continued from page 2)

unusual concept of organ donation and transplantation. Buried in the stack of entries was a simple, hand-drawn stick family holding hands. A little boy in kindergarten, wise beyond his years, had submitted the poster with a simple heartfelt message: "Please help save my Daddy. Be an Organ Donor."

This poignant message was written by a 5-year-old boy who knew firsthand about the importance of donation. Without a liver transplant, he would lose his daddy. Joseph's mother, Meg, said when Joseph saw a flyer about the poster contest at the Helen Plum Library in Lombard, he was excited to rush home and draw his picture and mail it the very next day.

Joseph's poster won and his message would become the face of donation. Joseph and his family traveled to Springfield to receive his award in April 1992. Thanks to a generous donor, Joe Kralicek, Sr. received his liver transplant in November 1992.

Joe has been enjoying life to the fullest for more than 18 years and is doing very well. "The fact that I have survived all this and have been able to live a normal life and not die at age 35 continues to amaze me. The doctors told me without my transplant I would not have survived more than a couple more months."

Joe is a truck driver for Dreisilker Motors in Glen Ellyn, and he and his family now live in Plano. He was able to meet his donor's two daughters 10 years ago and continues to keep in touch with them.

As for young Joseph, the budding artist is now age 24 and will receive his associate degree in art in May. He currently works for UPS in Addison.

The poster contest continues today as an important part of the Organ/Tissue Donor Program. Secretary White continues to make organ donation and the donor registry a priority so that little boys like Joseph Kralicek don't have to suffer the agony of waiting for a much needed transplant for a loved one.

## Federal grant for testing donor registration at metro facilities

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Transplantation, has awarded a two-year grant to the Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor Program, the Gift of Hope, the National Kidney Foundation of Illinois and the University of Illinois to test ways to increase donor registrations at Driver Services facilities in the Chicago Metro area. Participating facilities will be chosen based on current donor registration rates with the best and worst performing facilities receiving special attention. The grant program is expected to begin in late summer 2011.

## Donor Awareness in Cook County

The Cook County Board approved a proclamation to recognize Jan. 4, 2011, as Organ/Tissue Donor Awareness Day in Cook County. Secretary of State Jesse White spoke at a press conference to mark the occasion.

"I commend Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, Cook County Commissioner Robert Steele and Cook County Board members for helping to bring awareness to organ and tissue donation," said Secretary White. Commissioner Steele received a kidney transplant last November. His sister donated a kidney to him. Steele said his surgery and his sister's generosity have helped him make a new commitment to promote education about organ/tissue donation in Cook County.

### Organ/Tissue Donor Program Staff

Please contact a donor staff member for story ideas or to volunteer for events in your community.

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