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Jesse White Encourages Organ/Tissue Donation for National Minority Donor Awareness Week

Secretary of State Jesse White hosted the National Minority Donor Awareness Week event “Wave Away the Waiting” to promote organ/tissue donation for multicultural communities. White was joined by donor recipients and families.

“We are working together to end the wait for those in need of organ donation,” said White. “Unfortunately, minorities are in great need of organ transplants, yet they donate at a lower rate. I encourage everyone to register to become an organ/tissue donor to help give the gift of life to someone in need.”

Nationally, people of color comprise 59 percent of the waiting list for organ transplants; however, this year they accounted for only 33 percent of those who donated organs, according to the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network.

According to the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network:

- Currently there are 1,464 African Americans on the waiting list, but in 2018 only 153 African Americans became donors.
- There are 823 Hispanic Americans on the waiting list, but last year only 137 Hispanic Americans became donors.
- There are 237 Asian Americans on the waiting list, but only 27 Asian Americans became organ donors in 2018.

In Illinois, 6.7 million people are registered as organ/tissue donors, yet there are approximately 4,700 people waiting for transplants. People of color are disproportionately affected by illnesses such as hypertension and diabetes, which can lead to the need for dialysis or a kidney transplant, increasing the number of patients on the organ transplant waiting list, according to United Network for Organ Sharing. On Jan. 1, 2018 a new law spearheaded by White went into effect allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to register to become organ/tissue donors. To date, more than 70,000 teens have registered.

Dozens of volunteers participated in the event, which was held on the plaza of the James R. Thompson Center in recognition of the awareness week, August 1-7. Vicki Walker, a donor mom, spoke at the event along with Kim Gosell, a three-time kidney recipient and Freddy Perez, a heart recipient. A registration table was available at the “Wave Away the Waiting” event for people to join the Secretary of State’s Organ/Tissue Donor Registry. The Jesse White Tumbling Team also performed.

Illinoisans can register with the Secretary of State’s Organ/Tissue Donor Registry online at LifeGoesOn.com, by calling 1-800-210-2106 or by visiting their local Driver Services facility.

