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'Compelling story' of late organ donor featured in ad

By Jennifer Delgado

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A new advertising campaign launched today for National Donate Life Month features a longtime organ donation advocate who died this year waiting for a kidney.

advertisement

Vikki Tulcus, a coordinator for the state's organ and tissue donor registry, appeared in last year's organ donor commercial but died Jan. 9 awaiting a kidney transplant. State officials decided to honor her life's work and memory by telling her story — and how she donated her corneas to two women.

"Normally we don't use the same person twice, but because of her compelling story ... we thought that we should do a rerun after she passed away," Secretary of State Jesse White said at a press conference today surrounded by donor recipients and Tulcus' family. "She didn't get her gift when she was alive ... but then, as she was leaving, she made sure someone got a gift. I think that's quite a story within itself."

The 31-second commercial ([shown here at YouTube](#)) shows photos of Tulcus graduating, standing on the beach and talking about the donor program. It will appear on TV and radio and will be played on 650 movie screens across the state, state officials said.

"Restoring your life as you knew it is the biggest gift that you can get," Tulcus says in the clip. "You just don't even realize how lucky you guys all are to have a normal life."

White added that the state is stepping up its efforts to promote the organ and tissue donor program by establishing new partnerships with libraries, universities and community colleges and retraining clerks at state facilities.

More than 5.2 million people are registered as organ and tissue donors in Illinois, according to the secretary of state's office.

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