Longtime donor advocate and double lung recipient Megan Herdegan, age 31, from Arlington Heights, lost her battle with lung disease on October 19. Megan was a huge supporter of the Life Goes On program, becoming actively involved shortly after receiving her transplant in July 2007.

Megan was featured in the 2009 Secretary of State donor commercial and her photo appears in donor registration brochures and banner displays. She is also featured in the countertop display at the Schaumburg Driver Services facility.

Having endured severe asthma since she was a baby, Megan’s only hope was a lung transplant. After waiting six years she received a double lung transplant at age 27, and was so grateful for her gift that she worked tirelessly to promote donation. In addition to helping at donor registration drives, Megan participated in the “Hustle up the Hancock” event and was a member of Team Illinois as part of the biannual Transplant Olympic games.

Megan was a graduate of Dominican University and acted in many theatrical productions with her local theater group. She was an extraordinary young woman who touched the lives of so many. She will be sadly missed by everyone who knew her.

For copies of the Life Goes On newsletter or other donor materials, please call 800-210-2106 or visit LifeGoesOn.com

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Employee Connection

Norma Carrera of the Rockford Driver Services facility knows what it’s like to ride an emotional roller coaster caring for a child in need of a transplant. Norma’s daughter, Vanessa, age 27, has been waiting now seven years for a second kidney transplant. Her first kidney transplant at age 13 failed when she was 18, landing her back on the waiting list.

Vanessa’s first kidney was from a living donor, a cousin who felt it was her mission to give Vanessa a second chance at life. Unfortunately, a bout with shingles damaged the living donor’s gift and Vanessa felt the sting of being placed back on the waiting list a few years ago.

Vanessa also suffers from diabetes, congestive heart failure, lung disease and silent epilepsy, so Norma and her son, Peter, an Iraq veteran, provide round-the-clock care for her. In addition, dialysis takes its toll on Vanessa’s body. But the whole family is very determined to get Vanessa through her ordeal as they wait for another transplant.

Helping Vanessa get through her medical problems is her love of writing poetry. Norma wants to transfer some of Vanessa’s poems to a computer file so she can assemble them into a booklet someday. A computer whiz, Vanessa also enjoys spending time on her computer and has helped many people with computer questions.

“You feel the desperation of a mother with a sick child but there is nothing you can do,” said Norma. “But she always has a smile for us,” she added, of Vanessa’s determined attitude. “She never gives up.”

Donor awareness around the state

1. Secretary White presented the Joliet Driver Services facility with a countertop display featuring local residents Jerry and Jean Herbst. Jean received a lifesaving liver transplant in 1992.
2. Secretary White honored St. Alexius Hospital for its work in support of organ/tissue donation. Left to right are: Carol Daffney, Sister Laura Mankinsky, Secretary White, Janne Hicks, Fr. Domingo Hurtado-Badillo, Melynda Litchfield, Liz Holst (holding plaque), Mary Chapman, and Lisa Palmer from Gift of Hope.
3. Secretary White addresses the Jordan Temple Missionary Baptist Church congregation about the importance of registering as an organ/tissue donor.
4. At a press conference at Rockford Memorial Hospital, Secretary White recognized nurse and longtime Life Goes On member Bobbi Smith for her work supporting organ/tissue donation. Bobbi’s daughter was a donor who gave the gift of sight to others.
5. Secretary White shares a laugh with broadcaster Bill Czaja during a radio interview at a Rockford Riverhawks baseball game.
6. Secretary White presented a countertop display featuring local resident and liver recipient Collette Jordan to managers of the Naperville facility, including (from left): Tom Thornton, Drivers supervisor; Jim Sepsis, administrative clerk, Vehicles Services; John Stauney, Drivers manager; Dean Pott, Drivers supervisor; Frank Francis, zone manager; Russell Nisivaco, Drivers assistant manager; and Don Cipowski, senior manager.
7. During a visit to Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove, Secretary White recognized the hospital’s support of organ/tissue donation and met with various hospital staff members.

Chicago Slaughter hosts donor event

Secretary White attended a special Donor Awareness Night hosted by the Chicago Slaughter football team in April. Jarrett Payton, son of the late Walter Payton of the Chicago Bears and staunch donor advocate, is a running back for the team. Secretary White and Jarrett spoke to Slaughter fans about how donation has touched their lives.