

# Life Goes On

Secretary of State Jesse White • Fall 2012

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

As we move into fall and winter, there are many events and activities to look forward to. National Donor Sabbath is around the corner in November, and the Organ/Tissue Donor Program staff is busy planning events with faith-based groups and organizations to spread the word about donation.

Over the summer, Donor Program staff visited facilities statewide training frontline employees about the facts and misconceptions of donation. We learned that as each employee had a better understanding of donation, they were better equipped to provide quality information to customers. Without the help of our facility employees, Illinois would not be a leading state in donor designation rates.

Donor Program staff also partnered with many civic organizations, agencies and donor families to hold races in honor of donation. From Rockford to Springfield to Newton, Illinoisans took part in fun and healthy runs to benefit and raise awareness for donation. This issue features these events as well as other donor events held throughout the state.

I look forward to continuing spreading our lifesaving donor message this fall and encourage you to get involved as well.

*Jesse White*

Jesse White  
Secretary of State

## Donor brother raises awareness about donation



Secretary of State Jesse White with donor brother Cortez Lutrell and his sisters Tosha (left) and Osha prepare for the Illinois State Fair Twilight Parade in August.

Cortez Lutrell, a 15-year-old Edinburg resident, lost his brother, Henri, last year to suicide. The family decided to donate his organs. In honor of his brother, Cortez now advocates donation wherever possible.

This summer, Cortez volunteered with the Springfield Life Goes On Committee to raise awareness by not just joining 70 other volunteers in the Illinois State Fair Twilight Parade, but wearing Gift of Hope's liver mascot costume, Morgan D'Organ, on the float.

"I really want to set an example, let others know that donating organs can not only save lives but also help family members," said Cortez.

Cortez was featured on Springfield's News-Channel20 while helping committee members decorate the float. He tried on the costume for the first time and was asked how it felt being inside the mascot. Cortez humorously replied, "Hot... it's very hot!"

It's efforts like those of Cortez's why Illinois is one of the leading states in donor designation rates!



**FACILITY TRAINING** — Havana facility manager Kendra Braden (right) and employee Amanda Miller show off their Donate Life shirts after completing donor awareness training. Donor Program staff traveled statewide over the summer to train frontline employees about the benefits, facts and misconceptions of donation.

## National Donor Sabbath — November 9-11

For more information visit [www.organdonor.gov/materialsresources/donorsabbath.html](http://www.organdonor.gov/materialsresources/donorsabbath.html).



Red Shoe Run 2012

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## Red Shoe Run, Rockford

It all began at a Rock River Valley Life Goes On meeting in Rockford in 2002 when volunteers were planning events. Two of those volunteers, Jan Eschen and Bobbi Smith, suggested holding a 5K run during National Donate Life Month in April. Bobbi and Charles Smith had recently lost their 28-year-old daughter, Carrie, who was a cornea donor. Donor Program regional coordinator Jan Eschen had lost her husband, John, to leukemia; a marrow transplant donor was not found.

The Red Shoe Run was created "to honor those who generously donate, to remember those who died waiting, and to bring hope that those who need a donor will find one in time." The race was named for Carrie's love of red running shoes, and the money raised would pay for tissue-typing new members of the Be the Match Marrow Registry.

The first race in 2004 brought out 300 people to run, walk and listen to moving stories of people whose lives were affected by donation. In April 2012, nearly 1,200 people participated. For more information, visit [www.redshoerun.org](http://www.redshoerun.org).

## Transplant 5K Run/Walk, Springfield

Memorial Medical Center's 8th annual Transplant 5K Run/Walk, hosted by the Alan G. Birtch, M.D., Center for Transplant Services, registered 501 participants for the September 8 event in Washington Park. The event raised more than \$9,000 to benefit the hospital's transplant assistance fund.

The featured speaker was Bill Coon, a double heart and kidney transplant recipient. Bill is the author of *SWIM, A Memoir of Survival*. He shared his inspirational story and then signed copies of his book. For more information on his book, visit [www.BillCoonBooks.com](http://www.BillCoonBooks.com). For more information on Memorial's Transplant 5K, visit [MemorialTransplantServices.com](http://MemorialTransplantServices.com).



Memorial Medical Center's transplant team at the 5K Run/Walk in Washington Park, Springfield.

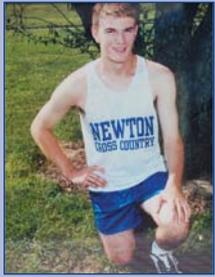
## Running Across the U.S. for donation

Recent college graduate Christopher Praetzel is running across the United States in honor of his brother, Brian, with hopes of increasing the number of registered donors. Brian received a heart transplant at age 3. On his website at [www.brotherlyloverun.com](http://www.brotherlyloverun.com), Christopher states: "My brother Brian is one of the closest people in the world to me; he is much more than just a brother, [he is] one of my closest friends. When Brian was born he was not given really much hope of living at all. To have him in my life and the life of my family has been one of the greatest miracles. It is my greatest mission for this run [to encourage others] to be donors, so others may get this [lifesaving] opportunity."

Christopher began his journey in May in California and made his way through the Rocky Mountains and the Mojave Desert. He ran through record high temperatures in Kansas and is continuing through the Midwest until he reaches his east-coast destination of New Jersey sometime in October. On average, he runs 30-40 miles per day (a full marathon is 26.2 miles), and pushes his belongings such as water, a change of clothes,

(continued on page 3)

# AN/TISSUE DONATION



## Nick's Race, Newton

Sue and Nick Volk held their 10th Annual Nick's Race in Newton at Sam Parr State Park in June. The race honors their son, Nick, who was a donor. Nick had always been an advocate for donation, dating back to when he turned 16 and received his driver's license, telling his mom, "...of course I want to be a donor." In May 2002, Nick was killed in a car accident along with several of his friends.

Nick and his sister, Bobbi, shared a love for cross-country, so it was Bobbi's idea to start Nick's Race. The race, which benefits the Newton Community High School Cross-Country Team and Nick Volk's Scholarship Fund, has raised more than \$94,000 over the past 10 years. For more information, visit [facebook.com/nicksrace](http://facebook.com/nicksrace).



Nick Volk's family, including (from left) sister Bobbi Nance, father and mother Lee and Sue Volk, and sister and niece Andrea and Allie Wendling, along with Steve Hardwick, a friend and emcee for the event, share a few words during Nick's Race.

(continued from page 2)

a tent and snacks in a jogging stroller.

On August 19, Christopher's journey brought him to Springfield where he met with Springfield Life Goes On members. When interviewed by local television and radio stations, he shares his goals of registering more donors during each interview. Any monetary donations he receives along the way will be donated to Donate Life America, the national coalition on donation. Check out Christopher's blog at [www.brotherlyloverun.blogspot.com](http://www.brotherlyloverun.blogspot.com).

Right: Christopher Praetzel made an appearance at the Secretary of State tent at the Illinois State Fair during his stop in Springfield.



## Employee Connection



Jesus "Chuy" Soto

At the tender age of 5, Jesus "Chuy" Soto of the Chicago West-side Driver Services facility had a number of medical issues, including a tumor. It was after the tumor was removed at Child-

ren's Memorial Hospital that his family was informed that he had leukemia. Chuy said they had a really good social worker at the hospital who approached the family about a bone marrow match. Thankfully, Chuy's 3-year-old younger brother, Roberto, was a match.

According to the doctors, however, Chuy wasn't expected to make a full recovery after the transplant due to the extensive chemotherapy and radiation treatments he had endured. Roberto also faced complications of his own – the possibility of not being able to walk due to the amount of bone marrow that was to be taken. Against the odds, the transplant was a success, and both Chuy and Roberto have fully recovered and been happy and healthy since the transplant.

Chuy has been with the Secretary of State's office for eight years and is an active proponent of donor awareness. When asked what organ/tissue donation means to him, Chuy responds, "It is about giving the gift of life to someone and the chance to be able to see the light of another day."

### 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 "Life Goes On" brochure.

# N/TISSUE DONOR.

## Lefferts to ride Donate Life Rose Parade float

Vivian and Larry Lefferts of Normal will represent Gift of Hope at the 2013 Donate Life Rose Parade festivities in Pasadena on New Year's Day. Long-time Gift of Hope volunteers, the Lefferts will honor the legacy of their son, John, a cornea, bone and tissue donor, whose gifts have touched the lives of more than 30 people since his death from an aortic aneurysm in 2004.

"The Lefferts' selection as our representatives at the 2013 Donate Life Rose Parade festivities couldn't be more fitting, especially considering the theme of the Donate Life Rose Parade Float — Journeys of the Heart," said Jerry Anderson, President/CEO of Gift of Hope. "They truly personify that

theme because the tragic loss of their beloved son led them on a new journey to continue John's legacy through the gifts he offered through his tissue donation."

The Lefferts began by working with Gift of Hope's grassroots letter-writing campaign in support of the law that created the Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry in 2006, making a person's wishes to be a donor legally binding. In the years since, they have continued to help save and enhance countless lives through their volunteer efforts. They even use their fireworks company as an opportunity to promote donation, showcasing the Donate Life logo and donor message through their



The Lefferts family

pyrotechnic displays.

"They have not only fully embraced our mission and cause, but they continue to represent the generous and hopeful spirit of all donor families," added Anderson.

## Donor awareness around the state



1

(1) Secretary White warms up before throwing out the first pitch at the Southern Illinois Miners baseball game during a donor awareness event in July.



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(2) Springfield Life Goes On volunteers handed out donor information at a Springfield Muni Opera production of Beauty and the Beast in August. An ad provided by Donate Life Illinois appeared in Muni programs that reached more than 30,000 attendees over the summer.

(3) The fifth annual Colby Smith Memorial Run was held in Freeport in August. The run was started by Colby's parents five years ago to honor their son who was a donor. Pictured are Colby's parents Mida and Tim Smith with winners of the race.

(4) The Illinois Eye-Bank recently celebrated 60 years of vision at the Black and White Night for Sight. Pictured is (left to right) Karen Thacker, Cindy Patterson and Kelly Schuler, OSF St. Joseph Healthcare; Lisa Dodson, MTF; Bob Albrecht, Illinois Eye-Bank; Gina Martin, MTF; and Liz Hager of the Donor Program.

(5) Kara Kelly (left) of the Illinois Eye-Bank talks with Worsham College of Mortuary Science student Nanette Wegrzyn of Waukegan about the importance of donation at the IFDA Convention in June.



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5