

# Life Goes On

Secretary of State Jesse White • Fall 2013

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

While we still face the challenges of the critical shortage of donated organs and tissue, we have been moving forward with new programs and increased numbers in the donor registry. This is because of your dedication to the Organ/Tissue Donor Program and hard work on the frontlines. Donor Program staff has increased facility visits to better serve you and to provide much needed training. Many more new programs are being planned for the fall and winter.

In August, we observed National Minority Donor Awareness Week to provide information to minorities about the special needs in their communities. We were very impressed by the huge turnout at the "Wave Away the Waiting" event in Chicago. Our donor message reached the nearly 400 people in attendance as well as those who were just passing by and stopped to chat or listen to our lifesaving donor message or even join the registry.

Again this year we will observe National Donor Sabbath during the weekend of November 15-17. We will be reaching out to the faith community to educate parishioners and congregants with our donor message and encouraging individuals to share their personal stories with their fellow worshipers. If you have a donor story, please talk to your faith leader about sharing it with others in your place of worship in November.

Your efforts in continuing to spread the word about donation are greatly appreciated by those who still wait for the gift of life.

*Jesse White*

## National Minority Donor Awareness Week — "Wave Away the Waiting"



Secretary of State Jesse White and Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network CEO Kevin Cmunt (center) are surrounded by nearly 400 participants at the "Wave Away The Waiting" event at the Thompson Center in Chicago in recognition of National Minority Donor Awareness Week. (See more photos inside.)

National Minority Awareness Week was observed the first week of August with a special event held at the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago on August 1. Secretary of State Jesse White joined with nearly 400 donor advocates, staff members, transplant recipients and doctors at the Thompson Center plaza to "Wave Away The Waiting" for the many people currently waiting nationally for organ transplants. Dressed in matching t-shirts for solidarity, the attendees represented the more than 300 people who die each year in Illinois waiting for life-saving transplants.

"There is a long list of people waiting for transplants within multicultural communities," said Secretary White. "Kidneys are very much in need. Since genetic matches between people belonging to the same ethnic group are most successful, it is imperative that people of simi-

lar ethnicities become organ and tissue donors."

Twenty vendors including the Illinois Eye Bank, the National Kidney Foundation of Illinois, Biological Resource Center of Illinois, Life Source, Safe Haven, Walgreens, LA Fitness and several hospitals staffed informational tables inside and outside the Thompson Center, answering questions about their services. In addition to an inspirational speech from Secretary White, Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Lamar Hasbrouck also spoke about the critical need for more minority donors. Transplant recipient Charmin Edwards also shared her emotional transplant journey and introduced her donor, Rick Diatchman.

The event was a phenomenal success in raising awareness about donation, with many passers-by stopping to listen to the messages, join in on the activities and register to be donors.

## Donor Events Across the State



Secretary of State Jesse White throws out a pitch at a Marion Miners baseball game during the annual donor night at Rent One Park in Marion.



Secretary White registers Marion Miners baseball player Ralph Santana at the annual donor night at Rent One Park.



Esteban and Arianna Hernandez visit the Life Goes On table at a Kane County Cougars baseball game in Geneva.



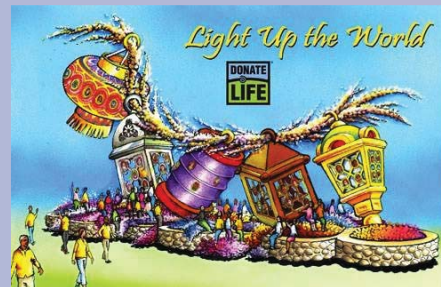
Jamie Sparks (striped shirt), who is awaiting a second kidney transplant, and her family participated in the Family Fun Walk held in her honor in Lake Villa. Jamie's mother, Pat (third from left), was Jamie's first kidney donor.

## Rose Parade float to "Light Up The World"

Story courtesy of Donate Life America

At the Donate Life America Los Angeles conference in June, more than 70 organizations supporting Donate Life America's life-saving mission unveiled their 11th Donate Life Rose Parade float — "Light Up the World" — a festival of beautiful lanterns that will inspire viewers worldwide to save and heal lives through organ, eye and tissue donation. The Donate Life float and its honored participants are the centerpiece of a national campaign that leads up to the 2014 Rose Parade on New Year's Day.

The float will feature a festival of lanterns illuminating 30 riders — all organ/tissue recipients — and 12 living organ donors walking alongside to demonstrate their



ongoing vitality. The float's five lanterns will be adorned with 72 memorial flora-graph portraits of deceased donors whose legacies of life shine brightly. Riders are seated throughout a dedication garden filled with thousands of roses bearing personal messages of love, hope and remembrance.

## Minority Donor Awareness Week (continued from page 1)



Secretary White addresses attendees of the "Wave Away the Waiting" event in Chicago. To White's right is Department of Public Health Director Dr. Lamar Hasbrouck who also addressed the crowd.



ABOVE LEFT: Angelo Perry of Danville signed up to be a donor at the Danville Public Library's Minority Donor Awareness Day in August.



ABOVE RIGHT: Kidney recipient Charmin Edwards introduced her donor, Rick Diatchman, during an emotional speech at the event.

## Employee Connection

Morris Driver Services facility employee Al Penninger of Oswego knows what it's like to have an illness present itself seemingly so quickly that the only treatment was an organ transplant. Al, now 60, has worked at the Morris facility for about seven years. In April 2012, it was apparent to him and those around him that he looked very tired and his skin looked a yellowish tan. It turned out that decades of medicine to treat his ulcerative colitis since he was a teen had damaged his liver over time, something his doctors did not know years ago.



Al Penninger

Al went to his doctor who hospitalized him immediately and listed him on the national transplant list for a new liver. Just days later on April 28, 2012, Al received his new liver and a new lease on life. Al now is back to normal, having just returned from a trip to Ireland with his family – a trip he never would have dreamed of taking more than a year ago.

"I feel great," said Al. "I am so grateful that there was somebody there when I needed my transplant ... Everything went very smoothly and I recovered so fast," he added.

Al volunteers with the Kendall County Special Olympics and will be assisting with the registration process again this fall in preparation for the local Olympics in February 2014. He also enjoys walks along the river and enjoying life in general thanks to a generous donor.

## Sisters need kidney transplants

Gillian Irons of Moroa was excited for school to start this year. The third-grader received a kidney transplant in December 2008. Born with a rare kidney disease, Gillian was forced to miss a lot of school previously. Because of her transplant, she can now live her life like a normal third-grader. Gillian's 3-year-old sister, Grace, also has been diagnosed with the same disease and will eventually need a kidney transplant.

When you consider the total number of children waiting nationally for an organ transplant, it would take more than 30 school buses to transport the more than 1,800 children who wait every day for

their gift of life. You can help ensure that Grace's wait for a kidney won't be long by joining the Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor Registry today.



Gillian and Grace Irons

## NATIONAL DONOR SABBATH FRIDAY-SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15-17

Contact your faith leader to see how  
you can help spread the lifesaving donor message  
in your community.

## Donor Events Across the State



Members of the Rock River Valley Life Goes On/Donate Life Committee were presented with a Donate Life America medallion for their donor awareness efforts. Left to right is Jan Eschen, Betty Hepner, Julie Tilbury, Karen Ludwig, Brian Troy, Dwayne Collins, Katy Stenberg, Becky Schaeffer, Margaret Shannon and Kara Kelly.



Janice Earl of Decatur (second from right) shakes hands with Tuscola facility manager Mary Jo Fitzjarrold during a visit to the facility to thank them for supporting donation. Janice received a double lung transplant 21 years ago. Also pictured are facility employees Jeanne Pettry (left) and Michelle Schultz.



The Davis family of Belleville attended a St. Louis Cardinals baseball game in June where Clarence Davis threw out the first pitch in honor of his daughter, Jazmyne, who was an organ donor. With Clarence are his wife, Tanyice, daughter Taneisha, and sons Clarence III and Michael.



Several people signed up to be donors at Chicago's West Fest 2013. One of them was a nurse at Northwestern Memorial Hospital during the snow-storm of 2010 when a heart recipient was police-escorted to the hospital in the storm to receive his life-changing gift.

## Nascar driver Joey Gase supports donation



On July 21, NASCAR driver Joey Gase competed at the Chicagoland Speedway in Joliet sporting the Donate Life Illinois logo on his car. Donate Life Illinois sponsored Gase, who is a donor advocate in the NASCAR Nationwide STP 300 race.

Joey's mother, who passed away in 2011, was an organ/tissue donor, benefiting 60 people. Joey has had the opportunity to meet some of his mother's recipients and says that it was an amazing experience. Because of his personal connection to donation, Joey continues to support Donate Life regardless of where his racing career takes him. He uses each of his races as a way to honor everyone who has been touched by donation.

## Donor Program receives PACE awards

The Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor Program once again received recognition from the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) with Pace Awards for 2013. The 2012 National Donor Sabbath commercial won an award for the highest score in Category 2D: Radio Commercial or PSA, internally produced. A second award was given for a regular feature in the Secretary of State's *Life Goes On* quarterly donor newsletter called "Employee Connection," in which a Secretary of State employee is featured who has had an experience with donation. The entry won the highest score in Category 5C: Feature Story. Congratulations to all Donor Program staff who have contributed to the newsletter!



**DONOR PROGRAM STAFF TRAINING** – The Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor Program staff gathered in July for a one-day staff training meeting in Joliet. Kneeling is Brian Bush and assistant program manager Sitha Hun; standing are (from left) Felicia Lee, Margaret Shannon, Maria Martinez, Karen Kohnke, program manager Connie Boatman, Gail Grabczynski, Jan Eschen, Damarius Blanks, Liz Hager, Dan Lietz and Margaret Pearson.

## "National Night Out" in Berwyn

On Tuesday, August 6, Life Goes On regional coordinators Dan Lietz and Maria Martinez staffed a donor registration table during the 30th annual "National Night Out" celebration in Berwyn. National Night Out events across the country promote involvement in crime prevention activities, cultivate police-community partnerships and encourage neighborhood camaraderie.



The Figueroa family of Berwyn stopped by the Life Goes On table at Berwyn's National Night Out to tell donor staff that his daughter had received a new kidney at age 2. She is now a healthy 8-year-old thanks to the miracle of donation.

The city of Berwyn was awarded first place in the state of Illinois and 10th place in the nation for its event last year by the National Association of Town Watch. The city's 2013 event was attended by more than 5,000 people, many of whom stopped by the donor booth to sign up on the registry or tell us they had already registered as donors.

Berwyn resident Frank Figueroa approached the donor registration booth hoping to get a few more Donate Life green wristbands. He had been wearing a faded, well-worn green band around his wrist every day since Feb. 15, 2008, the day his 2-year-old daughter, Stephanie, received a lifesaving kidney. Today, Stephanie is a healthy, happy 8-year-old girl who loves the band One Direction. Her father thanked us for all the work we do promoting the lifesaving benefits of organ/tissue donation.



**LIFE GOES ON AT THE ILLINOIS STATE FAIR** – The Springfield Life Goes On Committee participated in the annual Illinois State Fair Twilight Parade in August in Springfield. Joining the volunteers are donor mascots Morgan D'Organ, Charlie the Corpuscule and Seymour Clearly.

**Join the Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry today at [LifeGoesOn.com](http://LifeGoesOn.com).**