



Life Goes On

Secretary of State Jesse White • Fall 2017

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

It was a busy summer for donor program staff as they traveled across the state promoting donor awareness at many fairs and festivals. Fall brings additional donor awareness opportunities in high school driver's education and health classrooms; fairs; and other events. One of the most exciting events in the Secretary of State's office this summer was the signing into law of the Drive for Life Act, allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to join the Illinois Donor Registry for the first time since 2005. This new law goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2018.

We also held the 5th annual Wave Away the Waiting celebration in observance of National Minority Donor Awareness Month on Aug. 1 in Chicago. Recipients shared their transplant stories at an outdoor celebration with music, entertainment and health and wellness displays. A spotlight was also placed on the need for more minority donors in the state.

As always, a big thank you to all of the Driver Services facility staff who help strengthen our mission of promoting donor awareness with customers increasing the donor registry in our state.

Jesse White

Jesse White
Secretary of State

5th Annual Wave Away the Waiting shines spotlight on minority donation

The need for more minority donors is great

The Organ/Tissue Donor Program celebrated its 5th annual Wave Away the Waiting event, in conjunction with National Minority Donor Awareness Month, on Aug. 1 at the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago. Entertainers, dancers, musicians, transplant recipients and donor advocates joined Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White on the James R. Thompson Center plaza for a day of increasing awareness about the need for more minority organ/tissue donors in Illinois.

"The need for minority individuals to say yes to organ/tissue donation is great," said Secretary White. Increasing the number of donors in Illinois ensures a greater chance of a successful transplant for everyone."

Addressing the crowd gathered on the plaza were Secretary White; Jack Lynch, Director of Community Affairs for Gift of Hope Organ &

Tissue Donor Network; Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson, kidney recipient; Darvece Monson, kidney recipient; Ibrahim Haleem, liver recipient; and Lisbeth Leanos, a living donor to her father, Santos Leanos.

Many health and wellness booths inside the Thompson Center provided information about topics of health and healthy living to those in attendance. Vendors included the Secretary of State's Life Goes On Organ/Tissue Donor Program, Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, National Kidney Foundation of Illinois, Lifesource, University of Chicago College of Medicine, Rock River Valley Blood Center, Be The Match and many other participants. Entertainment was provided by a Chicago Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra quartet, the Jesse White Tumblers and Dawn the Diva, who hosted a line dancing session.

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Secretary of State Jesse White addresses the crowd at the Thompson Center in honor of Wave Away the Waiting marking National Minority Donor Awareness Month. To Secretary White's right is Chicago Police Department Superintendent Eddie Johnson, who was waiting for a kidney transplant. He received his transplant on Aug. 30.

Wave Away the Waiting

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TOP RIGHT: Secretary White, center, stands with a quartet from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the Wave Away the Waiting event at the Thompson Center in observance of National Minority Donor Awareness Month.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Chicago Police Department Superintendent Johnson, who was waiting for a kidney transplant, addresses the crowd during the Wave Away the Waiting event. He received a kidney transplant from his son on Aug. 30.

FAR RIGHT: The Jesse White Tumblers perform during the Wave Away the Waiting event.



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Donor events across the state

Photo 1 – Secretary White addresses a group gathered for the Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network's 30th Anniversary Gala on Aug. 18 at the Bridgeport Art Center in Chicago. Kevin Cmunt, CEO of the Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, was also in attendance.



Photo 2 – HSHS St. Mary's Hospital, the Macon County Life Goes On Committee and the Macon County Health Department celebrated National Minority Donor Awareness Month by holding a donor drive at HSHS St. Mary's Hospital in Decatur. Pictured left to right: Marisa Hosier and Alaina Kramer of the Macon County Health Department; Lisa Stanley, Macon Township Supervisor; and Sr. Ritamary Brown.



Photo 3 – Current and former students from Cary Grove High School support organ/tissue donation at their "Jamming For Julie" donor awareness night on Aug. 2 at the Cary Lions Park. High school band director Marty Magnini's wife, Julie, underwent a transplant earlier in the year.



Photo 4 – The Springfield Life Goes On Committee's colorfully decorated entry in the Aug. 10 Illinois State Fair Twilight Parade in Springfield.



Photo 5 – Sr. Ritamary Brown, Richard Shelby, Erica Smith and Stacie Reichensperger pictured at the Twilight Parade for the Illinois State Fair.



Photo 6 – Nathan Wells, a 10-year-old heart recipient from Villa Grove, presented the Tuscola Driver Services facility with a countertop display in July. Nathan is living his dream of being able to play baseball.



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Drive for Life Act signed into law

Allows 16- and 17-year-olds to join the state's donor registry

The Drive for Life Act, passed by the Illinois General Assembly earlier this year, was signed into law in August. The law allows 16- and 17-year-olds to join the state's donor registry for the first time since 2005.

"This is good news for the donor registry in Illinois," said Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White. "We have the potential to add 350,000 names to the donor registry each year as a result of this legislation, saving more lives."

The donor decision in Illinois has been a legal decision since 2006, thereby excluding minors from being asked to participate. However, effective Jan. 1, 2018, the law will allow for as many as 350,000 16- and 17-year-olds to be added annually to the donor registry in Illinois when they receive their driver's license or state ID.

Chicago police superintendent receives kidney

Eddie Johnson gets lifesaving kidney from son on Aug. 30

Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson, 57, received a kidney from his 25-year-old son, Daniel, on Aug. 30 at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. The transplant was a success, and Johnson returned to work following a few weeks of recovery. Johnson was diagnosed with an acute inflammation of the kidneys when he was his son's age. He lived many years knowing his kidneys might shut down at any point. His original diagnosis projected that his kidneys would likely fail in four or five years. His kidneys functioned for more than three decades prior to his August transplant. Johnson spoke with Secretary of State Jesse White and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel at an Organ Summit in Chicago in February. Without a living kidney donor, Johnson would have been required to be on dialysis or might have had a five-year wait for a transplant.

Spotlight on Health

How is it decided who gets a transplant?

Have you ever wondered how organs are distributed to patients in need? A group called the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) maintains a centralized computer network that includes all organ procurement organizations (OPO) and transplant centers. In Illinois, the two OPOs are Gift of Hope and Mid-America Transplant.

When there is a potential donor, the OPO enters the donor's vital information and the computer network generates a list of ranked, suitable potential recipients for those donor organs. This list is called a "match run." Criteria includes medical urgency, tissue match, time on waiting list, immune status, likelihood of a successful match and location of the donor and recipient because distance can be a factor in a successful transplant. The transplant center then contacts the first matching potential recipient. The potential recipient and his or her doctors either accept or reject the organ based on condition of organ, condition of the recipient and transportation factors. The team has about one hour to make this decision. If accepted, the transplant surgery is scheduled. If declined, the organ is then offered to an alternative recipient. This process continues until the organ is placed.

Organ and blood donation face similar challenges

Organ/tissue donation not only donation affected by ethnicity

According to Lifesource, genetically similar blood is best for those who need large or recurring blood transfusions. It is a similar situation with organ donation – a comparable genetic match may ensure a more successful transplant. Blood that closely matches the patient's ethnicity is less likely to be rejected by the patient. African-Americans can make a monumental difference in the organ, tissue and blood supply in this country by donating blood regularly and signing up to be organ donors. Sickle cell is a common inherited blood condition among African-Americans. Those affected may require frequent blood transfusions throughout their lives. According to Lifesource, African-Americans are more likely to have type O or B blood, the most commonly used blood types for African-Americans.

Employee Connection

Woodstock Driver Services facility employee member of donor family



When Pam Brockman's husband, Al, suddenly died in February 2015, Pam made the donor decision for him. Staff from the Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor

Network contacted Pam, collected Al's medical information and proceeded with the process of donation. Pam was excited to receive a letter from Eversight Illinois a month after Al's death explaining that her husband's corneas were donated to two men in Ohio. She was even more elated to receive a second letter, forwarded to her from Eversight Illinois, from one of Al's cornea recipients. A section of the letter read, "Thank you so much for my gift of sight! I am a disabled veteran and second cornea recipient! Your generosity is overwhelming! Without your loved one's gift I would be blind." These words helped Pam confirm that her donor decision was a positive one following Al's death. "Although losing my husband so suddenly was heartbreaking, knowing that 'life goes on' and that he was able to give the gift of sight with his cornea donations helped me through my grief," said Pam.



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Donor events

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Photo 7 – Students at Wheaton Warrenville South High School in Wheaton support organ/tissue donation in driver's education class on Aug. 25 with all-day classroom presentations. A poster displayed in their classroom was the 2014 overall poster contest winner with artwork submitted by Allison Davis, a sophomore at the high school.

Photo 8 – Driver education students at Hinsdale South High School in Darien support organ/tissue donation in driver education teacher Dean Norman's classes. A few students had organ donor stories within their own families.

Photo 9 – Cartrina Sheard, of East St. Louis, IL, registered her donor decision at the 6th Annual Touchette Regional Hospital's "Keeping Healthy" event on Aug. 15 at the Community Center in Centerville.

Photo 10 – Some members of the Lenzini donor family of Park Ridge visited the organ/tissue donor table during the Destination Asia Festival in August at Morton Arboretum in Lisle. Pictured from left: Genevieve Sciortino; Emma Lenzini; and Cathy Lenzini.

Photo 11 – Kathy Armstrong, Cahokia Public Library director, who is waiting for a kidney transplant and currently undergoing dialysis, shared her story during a donor registration drive at the library during National Minority Donor Awareness Month.

Photo 12 – Karen Ludwig, a kidney recipient, volunteers with the Rockford Life Goes On Committee. She attended the 10th Annual Colby Smith Memorial Run honoring donor Colby Smith.



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Did You Know?

In 2016, 61 percent of individuals who received transplants were over the age of 50, but only 33 percent of organ/tissue donors were over the age of 50. Please encourage everyone you know to register as an organ/tissue donor today to help cover the shortage of organs available for transplant. Any age is the right age to register as a donor. Many older Americans are very successful tissue and cornea donors if they are ruled out as organ donors.

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