

# Life Goes On

Secretary of State Jesse White • Spring 2012

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

## Donor push at Illinois community colleges

As we continue our efforts to increase the number of people in Illinois' donor registry, we are reminded that those numbers represent new life for those who are waiting. Today, more than 112,000 people in the United States are waiting for a second chance at life through transplantation. Thousands more wait for life-enhancing tissue.

Here in Illinois, nearly 5,000 people are on the waiting list. Many of these men, women and children will die because of the critical shortage — needless deaths that could be prevented. While our registry continues to grow, so does the need.

During National Donate Life Month in April, we are implementing a new program involving community colleges. Donor drives and other special events will be held at colleges throughout the state to encourage young people to join the registry. In addition, thousands of volunteers, donor advocates, Donor Program staff and medical professionals will be stepping up their efforts to increase the number of registered donors. I encourage you to get involved and help spread the word about the lifesaving benefits of donation.

*Jesse White*

Jesse White  
Secretary of State

Many community colleges in Illinois will be promoting organ/tissue donation this spring with the help of Secretary of State Jesse White and Donor Program staff. In an effort to get colleges on board, Secretary White contacted college presidents directly about joining his office in promoting donor awareness.

A successful donor program at Richland Community College in Decatur last year is being used as a model for expanding to more campuses this year. Richland registered 130 people at its campus donor registration table last spring.

"It is my hope that many campuses will join forces this spring and have students staff a campus donor program, registering students and faculty alike," said Secretary White. "The program was so successful at Richland last year that we wanted to expand to include everyone this year."

Of the 59 community colleges in Illinois, many have signed on to the program. A guide for a successful campus effort was included in materials sent to the colleges. Ideas included forming a committee to coordinate the campus campaign as well as using marketing tools and emails to promote a campus donor drive, staffing a donor registration booth and distributing educational donor materials.

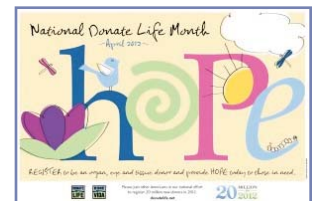
The campus push may also include a visit from Secretary White to thank colleges for their efforts in increasing donor registry numbers. Individuals with a personal interest in donation (transplant recipient or donor family member) also are encouraged to share their stories at campuses across the state.

For more information, please contact the Organ/Tissue Donor Program at 800-210-2106.



## Transplant milestone

Springfield's Memorial Medical Center's transplant team performed its 800th transplant on Dec. 26, 2011 (see story on page 2). The hospital's transplant center was re-named the Alan G. Birtch, M.D., Center for Transplant Services last May after the program's first medical director. Dr. Birtch passed away in December at age 79.





## March is National Eye Donor Month

Wilma, cornea recipient

Imagine living your life as if you were looking through waxed paper. You couldn't read the newspaper or your favorite recipes. You would have trouble identifying your grandchildren on the soccer field. You could no longer safely drive your car, relying on others to get anywhere.

For Wilma of Decatur, all these and many other issues were realities because of her battle against Fuchs' dystrophy, a genetic eye disease that slowly steals one's vision. Her only escape from permanent blindness was a corneal transplant using donated tissue from Heartland Lions Eye Banks.

In 2009, Wilma underwent two partial thickness corneal transplants. Within six weeks of her surgery, the retired bookkeeper and grandmother of five noticed significant improvements in her vision. She is now able to see 20/25 without glasses and 20/20 with corrective lenses for her astigmatism. Today, Wilma is back driving, reading and working on her computer as well as enjoying her favorite hobbies, including genealogy and bird watching.

"It's just unreal," said Wilma, "I look outside and not only see the tree and the leaves, but the stems and the veins of the leaves. And now I can tell the difference between squirrels and rabbits in my yard. I think of those who've never been able to see in their lifetime and how fortunate I am to be able to see. It's very emotional."

Since her surgery, Wilma continues to make a difference in Heartland's efforts to improve the eyesight of individuals in Illinois and around the world. She has written her donor families to thank them for their gifts, and is a generous financial contributor to Heartland's mission of helping to provide free gratis tissue to those in need and working with researchers in discovering the causes and cures for eye disease.

Wilma also encourages others to join the donor registry in honor of those who gave her the gift of sight. "Words can't tell you how much my donor and donor families mean. They gave me such a precious gift when they lost someone precious to them. I think of them every day when I wake in the morning and open my eyes."

## Springfield's Memorial Medical Center performs 800th transplant

Memorial's Transplant Services team performed its 800th organ transplant on December 26 on a 33-year-old kidney recipient. Operating surgeon was Marc Garfinkel, M.D., the program's surgical director.

The organ for the 800th transplant was offered on Christmas Day. It was a perfect match to the recipient, who had been on the waiting list for more than five years.

According to Sara Danner, transplant financial coordinator, the transplant team is uplifted by this significant milestone. "After being in existence for almost 40 years and with the support of MMC and its leadership, we are proud to continue to be the only transplant center in central and southern Illinois to provide this service to the patients in our area," she said. "With two surgeons and upcoming inclusion in the donor swap/chain program, we see our program growing dramatically."

Memorial's transplant program was established in 1972. In fiscal year 2011 (October 2010 to September 2011), the program's staff performed 32 organ donations, including 10 live donor kidney transplants, 18 deceased donor kidney transplants, and four deceased donor kidney-and-pancreas transplants.

Story reprinted from the Jan. 9, 2012, edition of the *Memorial Memo* newsletter.

## McLean County MissFits help raise donor awareness

With its blocks, hits and jams, roller derby is a full contact sport. Players have to be tough, but in the case of the McLean County MissFits, they're also not afraid to show some heart by supporting worthwhile community organizations.

(continued on page 4)



From left to right, MissFits skaters Skarebear and Wrecka Holmes present cornea recipient Pam Hardman and Illinois Eye-Bank regional coordinator David Hearn a check for \$500 during the team's "Thanks for Giving" event in November.

# LIFE GOES ON. BE A

## Donor events around the state



ABOVE LEFT: The College of Lake County partnered with Rosalind Medical College last November to host a donor registration table at Hawthorne Mall in Vernon Hills. Pictured are students Ramzi Bawab (left) and HyunSoo Lee.

ABOVE RIGHT: After turning 18, Katelin Ciambella of Decatur, and a student at Springfield's Robert Morris College, was waiting for a chance to join the donor registry when she spotted a display at the Women's Health Conference at the Civic Center in Decatur.



ABOVE: Rock Valley College nursing students Andrea Simonsen (left) and Mary Blake signed up donors at a registration drive outside the campus library in November.



ABOVE: The McLean County MissFits roller derby team with Illinois Eye-Bank regional coordinator David Hearn at the "Thanks for Giving" event in November.

## Employee Connection



Karen Barker with her mom, Janet Joyce.

Karen Barker has been with the Secretary of State's office for 12 years as a down-state field liaison. When coordinating Secretary of State college mobile units, she always includes organ/tissue donor information.

Karen's mother, Janet, has had diabetes for 20 years. "It's a tricky disease," said Karen. "After 20 years it really becomes destructive and takes a toll on many parts of the body, but the latest and most severe was affecting her kidneys."

Janet's kidneys had almost completely shut down. Her life became centered on a dialysis center three days a week for half a day each. She felt weak and was no longer able to live a normal life. The woman who had been known to care for her family, friends and neighbors was so busy trying to save her own life that she had no time to care for anyone else. "It changed the person she once was," said Karen. "She was dying physically and mentally."

It became apparent that a kidney transplant was necessary. Karen and her sister, Lori Cullen, as well as Janey, a good friend of Janet's, all met with a transplant team to see if any of them were a match. It turned out that all three were perfect matches! In the end, Janey was chosen as the donor.

"It was a quick and fairly simple surgery," said Karen. "Both women came through it like champs!" Janet is back to herself these days, and Janey, who had always been a great family friend, is now considered part of the family.

Karen jokes, "I still have my two kidneys and my mom!" But more seriously she goes on to say, "My daughter gets to spend more time with her grandmother, learning about what a great woman she is."

# AN ORGAN/TISSUE DONOR.

## MissFits raise awareness (continued from page 2)

On November 19, the MissFits hosted a "Thanks for Giving" event, featuring two bouts – as roller derby matches are called – with proceeds benefiting the Illinois Eye Bank. In total, they raised \$500 for the Eye-Bank, with an additional contribution coming from Glitter Fairy – Glitter Tattoos, which sold temporary tattoos at the event. Cornea recipient Pam Hardman of Cookeville accepted the money on behalf of the Eye-Bank. Donor Program staff members also were on hand to sign people up on Illinois' donor registry.

"I can't say enough good things about the MissFits," says Dave Hearn, Heartland's regional coordinator. "They're all about charity; they're all about giving back to the community. Plus, the event was a lot of fun."

Donor Program staff and the Illinois Eye-Bank also are hosting a donor drive on Saturday, April 7, during a roller derby bout at the Decatur Civic Center. The event will benefit Life Goes On in Macon County.

For more information about eye donation and the Illinois Eye-Bank, visit [www.illinoiseyebank.org](http://www.illinoiseyebank.org).

## Tips from the Illinois Eye Bank

# CONTACT LENSES AND WATER DON'T MIX

MICROSCOPIC ORGANISMS FOUND IN TAP WATER MAY CAUSE EYE INFECTIONS IN CONTACT LENS WEARERS IF PROPER CARE IS NOT FOLLOWED.

**TIPS FOR SOFT CONTACT LENS WEARERS:**

- > Carefully wash and dry hands before handling lenses.
- > Don't use tap water to rinse contact lenses or storage cases.
- > Take lenses out before doing any activity involving water like showering, using a hot tub or swimming.
- > Talk to your eye care professional about proper contact lens cleaning and storage methods.

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## AlloSource 10th annual Awards of Excellence

In 1995, AlloSource evolved from a local tissue bank in Denver, Colorado, into a national organization serving communities around the country. Today, AlloSource is one of the largest, most respected tissue banks in the United States.

On Dec. 8, 2011, AlloSource hosted its 10th annual Awards of Excellence in honor of donation and transplantation, as well as outstanding employee achievement at its headquarters in Centennial, Colorado. Nearly 300 employees and partners of AlloSource were in attendance.

Illinois donor parents Jay and Pat Landers and donor recipient Mike Timmerman, along with his parents Ron and Dixie Timmerman, were invited to present donor testimonials as a reminder of the tissue bank's mission: *"Honoring the gift of donation, AlloSource responsibly develops, processes and delivers life-saving and life-enhancing human tissue to our communities."*

### Organ/Tissue Donor Program Staff

Please contact a donor staff member for story ideas or to volunteer for events in your community.

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