



Life Goes On

Secretary of State Jesse White • Spring 2016

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

April underway with “Reignite” launch at facilities

Reigniting enthusiasm for donation at state level

The Organ/Tissue Donor Program has jumped into April – National Donate Life Month – with exciting plans. This April, as we celebrate the second chances organ and tissue donation brings to hundreds of individuals each year, we are showcasing donation within our facilities. Donor staff is planning many facility awareness events this month, and I will be making facility visits to recognize employees for the work they do to encourage donation.

Earlier this spring, donor program staff completed “reigniting” the enthusiasm for donation at driver’s facilities throughout Illinois. A quick refresher course in asking the donor question was presented to facility employees to reinforce and ensure consistency of the donor message across the state. Donor staff conducted short presentations to facility staff and answered questions.

This year, we are on target to reach our goal of 6 million individuals registered as donors with the Illinois Secretary of State’s Organ/Tissue Donor Registry. This is an exciting goal as it translates into more lives saved, so please continue the work you do. Every additional name on the registry increases the chance for more individuals to get that second chance at life.

National Donate Life Month has begun in Illinois. The Organ/Tissue Donor Program staff has been preparing for events for months, soft launching a donor refresher course, “Reignite,” in Driver Services facilities to ensure consistency of the donor message across the state. Donor program staff completed small training sessions with facility employees about asking the donor question.

“I am very excited to be a part of our facility “Reignite” launch this April,” said Secretary of State Jesse White. “The individuals on the frontlines are our hard-working, multi-tasking facility employees who go above and beyond each and every day to make sure the donor question is asked hundreds of times. I thank them for their efforts.”

Facility managers and staff were very receptive to the message, which included

discussions and a short power point presentation. Many facility staff members had their donor questions answered and enjoyed the informal reminder sessions at their facilities.

“It’s always good to have a refresher course on asking the donor question,” said Joliet Driver Services facility manager Mike Christopher. “It’s such an important question, and the outcome can save lives.”

In addition to the short training sessions, donor program staff has planned numerous donor awareness events this month at many facilities, many of which include a visit from Secretary White. Facility staff members are being recognized for their continued support of donation as well as recipients, members of donor families and community members.



LEFT: Employees of the Lockport Express Driver Services facility listen to a brief refresher course on asking the donor question from a donor program coordinator in March. Pictured from left: Dolph McCall, zone manager; Laura Bryson, living kidney donor; and Bryan Hurt, facility manager. RIGHT: Staff at the Vandalia Driver Services facility enjoys the “Reignite” refresher course on asking the donor question. Pictured from left: Steve Weiss; Chris DuPlayee; Diane Simmons; and Jason Hollinshead, facility manager, who is seated.

Jesse White

Jesse White
Secretary of State

Rock River Valley Life Goes On committee member receives kidney

Karen Ludwig is an active Rock River Valley Life Goes On committee member.

Following years of medical issues, Karen Ludwig was diagnosed with chronic kidney disease and diabetes. She and her husband became organ/tissue donation advocates as her kidney function declined. Her medical complications continued with vision issues, rotator cuff surgery, pancreatitis and infections. After four years on the waiting list, Karen received her kidney transplant in December 2010, a gift from a 44-year-old woman who suffered a massive heart attack.

Karen's husband, Stan, attended Life Goes On meetings with her and participated in advocating donation/transplantation throughout her journey. He was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and had suffered many falls and strokes. In April 2015, Stan died. His corneas and tissue were recovered for donation. His family is grateful his gift was able to help others just as Karen's gift helped her.



Stan and Karen Ludwig

Heart Recipient promotes donation at Westmont High School

Tribute to Vikki Tulcus, a Westmont High School graduate

Willowbrook resident and heart recipient Gwendolyn Westlund recently hosted a donor awareness event at Westmont High School, Westmont, Ill., to spotlight the need for more kidney donors. At a basketball game at Westmont High School against Peotone High School, Peotone, Ill., Westlund and many others hosted an event called "Share A Spare," to help increase awareness for kidney donation. Several teachers and students from both schools are in need of kidney transplants. The basketball game included a moment of silence for Vikki Tulcus, an Organ/Tissue Donor Program coordinator who lost her battle with kidney disease three years ago. Vikki lived in Westmont and was a graduate of Westmont High School. Organ/Tissue Donor Program Coordinator and Vikki's fiance Dan Lietz gave a short tribute to Vikki during the evening. State Rep. Patricia Bellock also attended the event.



ABOVE: Participants in the "Share A Spare" kidney donor awareness event at a basketball game in February at Westmont High School in Westmont, Ill., include (left to right): Sarah Hergenother of Peotone, who needs a kidney; Kathy Lott, Westmont Rotary Club; Gwendolyn Westlund of Willowbrook, heart recipient; State Rep. Patricia R. Bellock (R) 47th District; Catherine Grist of Westmont, who needs a kidney; and Andrew Jagiello of Westmont, who also needs a kidney.

RIGHT: State Rep. Patricia R. Bellock (R) 47th District holds up a giant cardboard cutout of an Illinois driver's license in support of organ and tissue donation at "Share A Spare," a kidney donor awareness event in February at Westmont High School in Westmont, Ill.



Donation rates up nationwide in 2015

Increase in donations in Illinois

Last year, the country saw a record year for organ donation as well as in Illinois. Nationwide, more than 15,000 individuals donated more than 30,000 organs in 2015, the Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) reported. That's a 5 percent increase in numbers over 2014. Nationwide there were 2,800 heart transplants (5.6 percent increase); 17,875 kidney transplants (4.5 percent increase); and 7,130 liver transplants (6 percent increase). Most were deceased donors (80 percent), while 20 percent were living donors.

In Illinois last year, the Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network in Itasca, Ill., reported 380 donors who donated 1,077 organs. More than 2,000 donors in Illinois became tissue donors, donating corneas, veins, bones, heart valves and skin. According to UNOS, donations by African-Americans and Hispanics also increased, which in turn increases the number of organs available for African-Americans and Hispanics on the national waiting list.

Naperville family experiences the importance of donation

Dad gets transplant, son chooses topic for Eagle Scout project

James Bond of Naperville began his battle with devastating kidney disease around the time of his son Brendan's birth 18 years ago. James, an assistant director with the federal government in Chicago, was diagnosed with IgA Nephropathy, an autoimmune disease where the immune system destroys the kidneys' function. James was originally told he would need a transplant in seven to 10 years, and he considers himself very lucky to have lasted 17 years before needing the transplant. His family's prayers were answered on Brendan's 17th birthday, March 12, 2015, when James received his new kidney at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in a 6-way kidney chain donation (a kidney swap) where three families agree to make the 6-way donation decision.

Brendan, a senior at Naperville North High School, was impacted for many years by his dad's illness. He decided in 2013 to make his Eagle Scout final project about organ donation. At the "Eyes to the Skies" festival in Lisle, Ill., in 2014, Brendan organized family members (mom Olga, sister Sarah), friends, fellow scouts and donor supporters – nearly 60 people in all – to

staff a donor registration table, with help and supplies from the Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor Program and the Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network. Over the course of the festival, Brendan and his friends registered 118 individuals. With his Eagle Scout project requirements now completed, Brendan will receive scouting's highest honor at a ceremony in May.

"With me being very ill, Brendan felt a strong desire to organize a donor awareness drive so that others would not need to suffer needlessly," said James. "We are very proud of all that our children have accomplished so far, and we are confident that great things are ahead for both Brendan and Sarah. They are wonderful examples of all that is right with kids these days."



The Bond family of Naperville (from left): mom, Olga; daughter, Sarah; son, Brendan; and dad, James, at Brendan's organ and tissue donor booth at the "Eyes to the Skies" festival in Lisle, Ill., in 2014.



Eagle Scout candidate Brendan Bond, fourth from right, stands next to his dad, James, at Brendan's organ and tissue donor registration table at Lisle's "Eyes to the Skies" festival in 2014. Brendan's father received a kidney transplant on Brendan's 17th birthday, March 12, 2015.

Plainfield driver's education teacher supports donation

Margaret Wolff's family made the donor decision twice



Margaret Wolff

As a softball coach and driver's education teacher at Plainfield Central High School in Plainfield, Ill., for 12 years, Margaret Wolff interacts with students and adults alike. She makes sure

her driver's education students learn to drive safely and her softball players learn skills and sportsmanship as well as a love for the game. She teaches compassion and encourages students to look out for one another. Several times a year, she invites the Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor Program staff into her classroom to educate her students about organ and tissue donation.

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BE AN ORGAN/TISSUE DONOR.**

Plainfield driver's education teacher (cont. from pg. 3)

She believes it's important that her students learn about donation at a young age so they can make informed decisions about donation when they turn 18 years old. She admits there are many myths circulating about organ and tissue donation – myths that she wants to dispel with the help of the Secretary of State's donor classroom presentations.

"Students need to be informed to make educated decisions to help others," Wolff said. "Most students fear organ donation because of lack of information on the subject."

She also adds a personal story for her students during these presentations. Wolff was one of many siblings growing up in southern Illinois. As a teenager, she lost an older sister Cindy at age 35 who became a donor when her mother was asked to donate her daughter's organs. Then several years later, Wolff also lost a brother Michael at age 46. Once again the Wolff family made the donor decision. Wolff's mother received letters from individuals expressing gratitude for those transplants. Wolff tells her students that her family's donor decision for both her siblings was a healing decision for her large family. She also helps to confirm the fact that a body, after the donation process is complete, is very carefully restored.

Additionally, Wolff became a tissue recipient last year when she had her ACL injury repaired with donor soft tissue. She gladly shares these stories with her students so they can understand the importance of donation and think positively about the subject in the future.



The Lady Salukis huddle during a women's basketball game at Southern Illinois University–Carbondale Arena, Carbondale, Ill., on Friday, Feb. 19, for Donate Life Night. A donor registration table in the arena was staffed by Life Goes On committee volunteers and SIU students to help attendees register as organ/tissue donors.



Southern Illinois University–Carbondale students and Saluki Athletics interns assist at the Donate Life women's basketball game at the arena in Carbondale on Friday, Feb. 19, to register organ /tissue donors.

**LIFE GOES ON.
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REGISTER AT LIFEGOESON.COM.**