



As your Secretary of State, I am honored to continue the mission to increase the Illinois Donor Registry, which currently stands at more than 7.5 million people. Every new registrant gives hope to those who wait for the gift of an organ transplant — the greatest gift a person can receive is a second chance at a healthy life. I am confident the registry will continue to grow so that those needing lifesaving transplants receive them.

I look forward to working with many of you to advance the office's many initiatives in the years to come, including the Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Program. I have had the pleasure of meeting many employees — especially at Driver Services facilities — to ensure my mission of providing the highest standard of customer service to the people of Illinois.

Thank you to those at our Driver Services facilities who encourage individuals to join the donor registry each day. You are on the frontlines of donor registration in Illinois, and you are making a difference.

Alexi Giannoulias
Secretary of State

Life Goes On

Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias • Spring 2023
A newsletter for Secretary of State facility employees and other organ/tissue donation advocates

April marks National Donate Life Month's 20th anniversary

National Donate Life Month (NDLM) is observed annually in April. In 2003, NDLM was established by Donate Life America and its partnering organizations to bring awareness to the importance of organ donation and the need for more donors. The month is a celebration of the lifesaving gifts organ/tissue donors provide to those waiting for transplants. Throughout April, donor organizations, transplant recipients, donor families, those waiting and donor advocates shine a spotlight on the lifesaving and life-enhancing benefits of organ and tissue donation. I am proud for our office to be part of the 20th anniversary.

The Organ/Tissue Donor Program will host events in April to encourage those that have not yet registered as donors to consider doing so. Learning about donation helps dispel myths and misconceptions surrounding this topic. Discussions with family and friends about the registry can be helpful to family members who are unsure about signing up. Throughout April, donor organizations and advocates help raise awareness about the lifegiving gifts donors make to others who are critically in need.



Donate Life America's 2023 NDLM artwork of a pond with frogs and lily pads illustrates new life in the spring and highlights healing and renewal. Frogs symbolize healing, and water lilies represent hope. Lily pads on the water's surface show only what we can see above the water, but below lies a complex supportive network of roots. Organ donation is much like this — a complex, unseen network of support and collaboration "behind the scenes" that makes organ transplantation possible, one person at a time.

The artwork reminds us of the ripple effect donation has on individuals. Organ transplantation provides the greatest benefit to the individual receiving the transplant; however, the ripple effect reaches far beyond the recipient's life. The result of a successful transplant means family members and friends don't have to lose a loved one, parents don't have to lose a child, and children don't have to lose siblings, parents or grandparents. Countless lives are made whole again from that single organ transplant. The number of individuals affected by a single person's successful transplant is remarkable.

This National Donate Life Month, we encourage you to learn more about donation and consider signing up. You can register quickly and easily from anywhere — even from your sofa. You don't need to leave your living room. Heroes don't always wear capes. Heroes are those who make life better for others. Help contribute to the registry's ripple effect to ensure that life goes on for others by registering as a donor at www.LifeGoesOn.com.

Advances in transplant surgery

The first lung-liver transplant has been performed at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. Lung-liver transplants are rare – only 10 have been performed in the U.S., according to the hospital. The recipient, a 63-year-old man from Vernon Hills, was waiting for a double-lung and liver transplant, but a single lung and liver from the same donor became available. Doctors encouraged him to accept the single lung with the liver because it was a perfect match. The recipient is recovering well.

U.S. reaches milestone of 1 million transplants performed

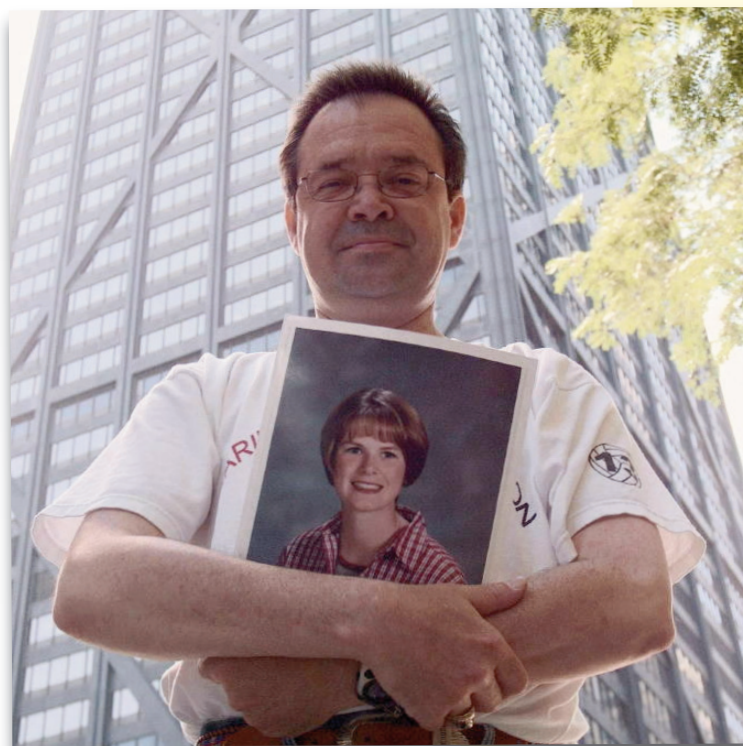


The United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), the federal agency responsible for overseeing the allocation of organs in the U.S., revealed that the U.S. performed its 1 millionth organ transplant, more than any other country. Those involved in the transplant and donation communities, as well as individuals embracing donation, have made this remarkable lifesaving statistic a reality. According to UNOS, the U.S. was on track to meet – or possibly surpass – 40,000 organ transplants in 2022, the number recorded in 2021. UNOS further indicates that half of all transplants performed in the U.S. have occurred in the past 15 years (since 2007). More than 400,000 individuals received a second chance at life because of organ transplantation.

'Hustle Chicago' raises awareness/funds for respiratory health, organ donation

Steve Ferkau lives in Chicago and works for the NYSE-Chicago. He said living with cystic fibrosis for many years was difficult at best. But in 2000, at age 39, Steve received new lungs from a 17-year-old Iowa donor named Kari. To honor his donor and raise awareness for lung and respiratory health and organ donation, Steve participated in the 'Hustle Chicago' for the 21st time on February 26. His team, Kari's Klimbers, climbed 94 floors (1,632 steps) to the top of the former John Hancock Building and raised more than \$18,000 for the Respiratory Health Association of Metro Chicago. For 20 years, Kari's Klimbers has participated in the hustle (previously known as the 'Hustle up the Hancock') and raised nearly half a million dollars for lung and respiratory disease research. Many of Kari's family, friends and children participated in the annual event to honor Kari's gift. In 2011, Steve needed a kidney transplant, and one of Kari's friends became a living kidney donor to Steve. He is beyond grateful for both gifts he received from generous Iowa donors.

"I always wear very loud Iowa gear. When people comment on it, I tell them about Kari and Alex. I often get some tears, then a laugh when I finish telling my story with, 'It seems that I'm slowly being rebuilt into a girl from Iowa,'" Steve said.



Lung and kidney recipient Steve Ferkau with a photo of his donor in front of the former John Hancock Building.



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Employee Connection



Ron Molinaro with daughter Alyssa Jean.

For Ron Molinaro – a Secretary of State employee in the Vehicle Services Department – the birth of his daughter, Alyssa Jean, in August 2007 was a joyous occasion. However, shortly after her birth, she was diagnosed with a hypoplastic left heart, as well as Symitar Syndrome, a condition where her left lung was abnormally small. Each condition is rare, but Alyssa had both birth defects. She was only the third documented case in the world at the time.

Shortly after Alyssa's birth, she was placed on the heart transplant waiting list. At 7 months old, Alyssa received her new heart on St. Patrick's Day 2008 at Milwaukee Children's Hospital. Unfortunately, the donor heart had come from across the country and had taken so long in transport that it did not function fully when it arrived. Tragically, Alyssa died less than two months later.

"The heart had to come a very long distance – from Colorado," Ron said. "If there were more local organ donors, [a heart] may have been

able to be transplanted sooner, which could have saved Alyssa's life."

In his daughter's memory, Ron started Alyssa's Angels, a not-for-profit that has organized winter coat drives, provided Thanksgiving dinner giveaways for those in need, and helped remodel space for the Boys and Girls Club in Zion. Ron is grateful for the support he received from the Secretary of State's staff during his daughter's illness, and he continues to promote organ/tissue donation.

"Everyone should be a part of the organ donor program," said Ron. "You just never know when it will be your family in need of such a precious gift."

Northwestern Memorial Hospital performs "heart in a box" surgery

For the first time in Illinois, transplant surgeons at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago have successfully taken a non-beating human heart and surgically implanted it into another person using a heart preservation machine called a "heart in a box." Most heart transplants involve removing a still-beating heart from a patient that has already suffered brain death and transporting it to a waiting candidate. The heart-in-a-box device, called a TransMedics Organ Care System Heart, involves quickly removing a non-beating heart and putting it into the device that resuscitates it, keeping it beating and oxygenated until transplantation. Doctors estimate the device could potentially increase the number of successful heart transplants by 20-30%. It could resuscitate hearts that were formerly considered unusable to save lives. Only a few hospitals in the U.S. have used this method, but hospitals in Australia and the United Kingdom have used the technology for years. Northwestern now performs about 30-40 heart transplants a year.



Gavin Dillon, liver recipient and donor program coordinator, left, pictured with former Chicago Bears player Mike Singletary at the 100 Black Men of Chicago 2022 Health and Wellness Expo at Malcolm X College in Chicago.

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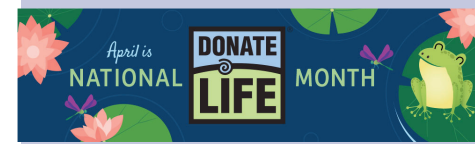
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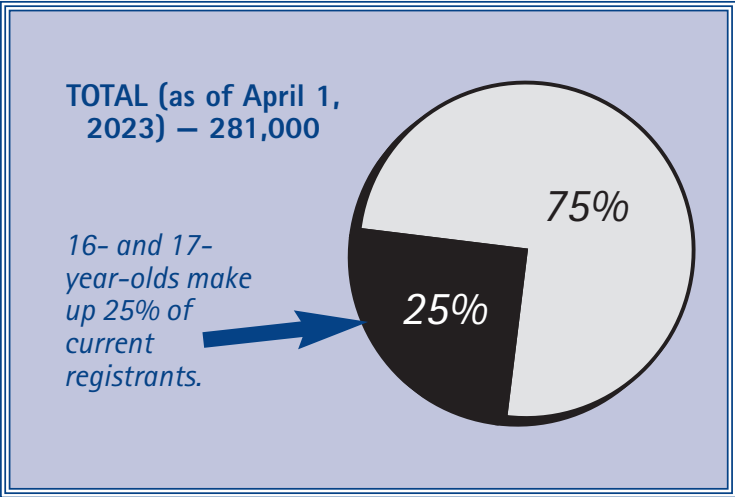
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Teens continue to register as donors

As of April 1, 2023, the total number of 16- and 17-year-olds registered as donors in Illinois in the last five years has reached more than 281,000. Each year on average, 4,500 16- and 17-year-olds register each month, or approximately 55,000 per year. Of the 196,570 registrants in 2022, 48,661 were 16- and 17-year-olds, comprising 25% of the total donor registry. The Drive for Life Act was enacted on January 1, 2018, and allowed 16- and 17-year-olds to register as donors in Illinois despite their minor status. Registering these teens would not have been possible without the Drive for Life Act and the Life Goes On donor program coordinators who educate teens in driver's ed classrooms and encourage them to register as donors when they receive their driver's licenses.



April is Donate Life Month — How much do you know about donation?

- 1) How many people are registered on the Illinois Donor Registry?
 - a) 50,000
 - b) 500,000
 - c) 5,000,000
 - d) 7,500,000
- 2) What is the most waited for organ on the transplant waiting list?
 - a) Liver
 - b) Pancreas
 - c) Kidney
 - d) Lungs
- 3) How many people in Illinois are waiting for a transplant?
 - a) 10,000
 - b) 2,000
 - c) 4,000
 - d) 1500
- 4) How many people in the U.S. are waiting for a transplant?
 - a) 40,000
 - b) 100,000
 - c) 125,000
 - d) 175,000
- 5) What is the minimum age to sign up to be a donor in Illinois?
 - a) 15
 - b) 18
 - c) 21
 - d) 16
- 6) What is the maximum age to sign up to be a donor in Illinois?
 - a) 65
 - b) none
 - c) 80
 - d) 90
- 7) How many people can a single organ/tissue donor potentially help?
 - a) 8
 - b) 12
 - c) 21
 - d) 25
- 8) How many organ transplants were performed in Illinois last year?
 - a) 2,020
 - b) 3,000
 - c) 3,700
 - d) 4,100
- 9) How many transplants have been performed in the U.S. so far (since 1954)?
 - a) 500,000
 - b) 750,000
 - c) 1,000,000
 - d) 2,000,000
- 10) What percent of the transplant waiting list is waiting for a kidney?
 - a) 75%
 - b) 50%
 - c) 85%
 - d) 25%

Answers: 1) D 2) C 3) C 4) B 5) D 6) B 7) D 8) A 9) C 10) C