

Life Goes On

Secretary of State Jesse White • Summer 2013
A newsletter for Secretary of State facility employees and other organ/tissue donation advocates

Donate Life Month in Illinois

Many community events, press conferences, dedications and donor registry entries made this April's Donate Life Month among the most successful in recent years. Hundreds registered their donor decisions on Illinois' Organ/Tissue Donor Registry during the month, a testament to the hard work and dedication of facility employees, Donor Program staff and the numerous volunteers and donor advocates who fanned out across the state promoting this life-changing, lifesaving cause.

April activities have given many waiting for a transplant hope for a brighter future and paid tribute to those who have died waiting for a transplant, including our very own Vikki Tulcus whose donor story was featured in our new donor commercial and brochure. My heartfelt gratitude goes out to everyone who has made a difference this April. Anyone who staffed a donor registration table invariably heard a donor story or two that made our efforts all the more meaningful.

This summer we continue to spread the word about the lifesaving gifts that donors provide. I thank everyone for all you do to make people aware that donation truly does save lives and gives hope to those awaiting a lifesaving transplant.

Jesse White

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Secretary of State

April's flurry of donor activities across the state included Donor Program staff and volunteers registering people at health fairs, schools, libraries, movie theaters, community colleges and a variety of other venues in an effort to increase the number of donors statewide. All these events help improve the chances of those on the waiting list in Illinois.

Secretary White kicked off Donate Life Month with a press conference on April 1 at the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago announcing the new donor commercial featuring Vikki Tulcus, a former Secretary of State employee and longtime donor advocate who lost her fight against kidney disease in January. Secretary White was joined by donor family members, transplant recipients and donor advocates as many remembered Vikki and vowed to continue their efforts to increase the number of donors statewide.

Press conferences in Springfield, Normal and Rockford also showcased April donor activities. Many who had a donor story to tell chatted with Donor Program staff

at donor registration tables throughout the state, including public libraries and select movie theaters. Tree plantings, park bench dedications and donor presentations to community and civic groups rounded out the month's activities. In addition, Secretary White visited several large Chicago churches where several hundred people joined the donor registry.

Many Driver Services facilities also celebrated Donate Life America's "Green and Blue Day" on April 19, wearing their blue Donate Life Illinois shirts and talking to patrons about donation. Secretary White visited three facilities in the metro-east area, capped off by a press conference in Belleville, and presented each with a Certificate of Appreciation for their commitment to donation.

More photos of Donate Life Month are inside.



Secretary White kicked off Donate Life Month with the unveiling of the new donor commercial featuring Vikki Tulcus at a press conference in Chicago. Joining White are Gift of Hope President Kevin Cmunt, Moreena Tiede and her daughter, Annika, a liver recipient.



The Benton Driver Services facility celebrated Donate Life America's "Green and Blue Day" on April 19. From left to right are facility manager Julie Hoppers and employees Melissa Carter, Cody Jo Wiggins and Patti Burlison.

Employee Connection

Justin Akers has been with the Secretary of State's office since October 2005, working at the Lawrenceville Driver Services facility. Justin and his wife, Ashley, are the parents of two children, Jayley, 10, and Jase, 6.



Justin Akers

At age 17, Justin injured his ACL in a sports-related injury. He continued to live with constant pain and the inability to do things that many of us take for granted. Over the years, Justin's knee continued to deteriorate, making him unable to run and play ball with his kids and do the activities he enjoyed most.

"Everyday activities were a challenge, even walking or rolling over in bed. Anything that put pressure on the knee caused pain," Justin said. He also is an Illinois High School Association official and had gotten to the point where he could not perform the duties of a referee.

All that changed in November 2011 when Justin received a tissue transplant to repair his torn ACL. Since his transplant, Justin has been able to play ball again with his children, coach his daughter's softball and son's baseball teams, and return to being an IHSA official working with youth sport teams. Justin said he cannot thank his donor or donor family enough for the gift he received.

"Asking customers to join the Organ/Tissue Donor Registry is more than just a part of my job; it truly is a life-changing opportunity," said Justin. "We have the ability to save and enhance lives every day."

**Join the Illinois
Organ/Tissue Donor
Registry today at
LifeGoesOn.com.**

April Donate Life Month across Illinois



1

#1 — Secretary White was joined by 15-year-old heart recipient Mikahla Thornton (left) and liver recipient Annika Tiede, both of Bloomington, at a bench dedication at Advocate BroMenn Medical Center.



2

#2 — Chicago Blackhawks center Marcus Kruger (left) and left wing Brandon Saad visited the donor registration table staffed by Wendy Lindemann and Margaret Pearson at a blood drive at North Central College in Naperville.



3

#3 — Jason Cook (left), president of the Harrisburg Kiwanis Club, Donor Program staffer Brian Bush and double lung and kidney recipient Stu Switzer discussed donation at a Kiwanis Club meeting.



4

#4 — Students of A-C Central Jr./Sr. High School in Ashland walk out of the press conference at Springfield's Memorial Medical Center holding glow sticks representing the 64 lives saved as a result of the hospital's 100 percent donor conversion rate.



5

#5 — Donor Program staff along with procurement organizations presented donor information at the Illinois Coroner's Association meeting in Springfield. Left to right are staff member Brian Bush; Brian Gustafson, Rock Island County coroner; Debbie Lanter, Mid-America Transplant Services; staff member Liz Hager; and Brad Targhetta, Macoupin County coroner.



6

#6 — Heart recipient Joe Irace (right) of Atwood and double lung/kidney recipient Janice Earl (back center) of Decatur came out to support the Decatur Derby Dames Organ Donor Night along with Janice's mother, Doris (lower left), and Joe's wife, Cris.



7

#7 — Secretary White and Donor Program Manager Connie Boatman (second from right) presented a plaque to (left to right) Pastor Beverly Wilson, Pastor H. Daniel Wilson and Billy Dyson at Valley Kingdom Church in Oak Forrest for their support of donation.



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#8 — Secretary White joined the Rev. James T. Meeks at Salem Baptist Church of Chicago House of Hope Worship Center for what was one of the largest single-day donor registration drives with 785 people registering.



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#9 — Secretary White held a press conference with donor advocates and members of the Cook County Health and Hospital System highlighting the collaborative effort between the two offices to increase donor awareness in Cook County and Illinois.



10



11

#10 — Cook County's Chief Business Officer Anthony Rajkumar joined the donor registry at a press conference announcing a donor partnership between the Secretary of State's office and the Cook County Health and Hospital System. Anthony also is a new member of the Life Goes On-Chicago Metro Committee.



12

#11 — The Rock River Valley Life Goes On Committee dedicated a tree at the Ethnic Heritage Museum in Rockford in memory of Donor Program staff member Vikki Tulcus. Secretary White joined Vikki's family members, including her fiancé, Daniel Leitz (back), at the dedication ceremony.



13

#12 — Secretary White presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Granite City facility employees for their commitment to donation. Left to right are: facility manager Paul Mooshegian, regional manager Amelia Odom, facility employee and donor parent Tamara Thurman, and Midwest Transplant coordinator Debbie Lanter.



14

#13 — Donor father Clarence Davis (far left), East St. Louis Mayor Alvin Parks and East St. Louis facility manager Aaron Blanks (far right) were presented a Certificate of Appreciation by Secretary White for the facility's donor awareness efforts.



15

#14 — Secretary White is surrounded by Springfield's Memorial Medical Center's Transplant Team.

#15 — Secretary White helps plant a tree honoring donor families at Naper Settlement in Naperville along with donor parents Dan and Lisa Richardson.



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#16 — Greg Stafford, chaplain and director of Pastoral Care at Springfield's Memorial Medical Center, prepares to fly the Donate Life Flag. The flag is flown for three days in honor of a person who becomes a donor, then taken down and presented to the family of the donor.



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#17 — Secretary White greets Kay Rogers, a donor father from Washington, who shared his personal story on donation at Advocate BroMenn Medical Center.

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Spotlight on Minority Donation

Encouraging donation in the Hispanic/Latino community

Despite Hispanics and Latinos being the third-largest minority on the national waiting list, they tend to be very skeptical about organ/tissue donation. And Hispanics (with Spanish-speaking origins) and Latinos (with broader Latin-American origins including those from Brazil) have high rates of obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes, similar to other ethnic minorities. This means that the need for a transplant is now a reality for many. Even though Hispanics comprise just 16 percent of the general population, they comprise 18 percent of the national kidney waiting list and 17 percent of the liver waiting list, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Hispanic and Latino skepticism about donation centers primarily on religious beliefs. Many first- and second-generation Hispanics still believe their religion prevents donation. Basic language barriers also need to be overcome by providing materials on donation in Spanish and promoting a positive and factual dialog about the importance of donation.

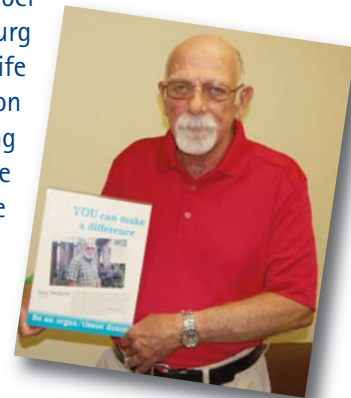
Many Hispanics and Latinos also believe that their loved ones will be disfigured during the donation process, preventing an open casket, or that the body, if not kept whole, will not go to heaven. Some also believe that death happens when the heart stops beating. Therefore, if someone's heart is kept beating by artificial means in order to keep organs viable for transplant, it is hard for some to understand that the person is actually brain dead and has no chance for recovery. Experts agree that understanding the difference between an individual being in a coma and being brain dead is crucial to understanding donation.

Understanding religious views on donation, overcoming language barriers and promoting a better understanding of the donation process and its benefits are critical to persuading Hispanics and Latinos that it is safe and advantageous to their community to register as donors. The more ethnically diverse the donor pool, the better the chance of a match within one's own ethnicity.

Where Are They Now?

Stu Switzer — a 20-year donor success story

Nearly 20 years ago in September 1994, Stu Switzer of Harrisburg received a second chance at life through the gift of organ donation when he received a double lung transplant. Stu's life prior to the transplant was difficult. He worked at the Illinois Youth Corrections Center as the recreational director, and as his health deteriorated, he became unable to walk across the gym floor without stopping several times to catch his breath.



After his transplant, Stu said he felt like a new man. He was able to return to work in January 1995 until his retirement in 2001. The lung transplant enabled Stu the chance to see both his son and daughter graduate from college and get married. He and his wife are now enjoying their four grandchildren. Because of his transplant, Stu also was able to take part in the 1996, 1998 and 2000 Transplant Games. Stu's co-ed basketball team even took home a silver medal in 1998!

In 2004, Stu once again was faced with the need for transplantation; his kidneys were failing this time. Fortunately, Stu's niece was able to be a living donor for him. The new kidney functioned well until 2008 when Stu was placed on the kidney transplant waiting list once again. After two years of waiting and dialysis, he received another donor kidney — this time a perfect match!

Stu says his entire family continues to be thankful every day for the gifts he has received over the years. Stu speaks about donation whenever he can with the message: "Give the gift of life and be an organ and tissue donor because life does go on!"

Organ/Tissue Donor Program Staff:

To contact a Donor Program staff member in your area, please call the Springfield toll-free phone number at 800-210-2106 or email lgo@ilsos.net.

Program Manager Connie Boatman — Chicago

Assistant Program Manager Sitha Hun — Springfield

NATIONAL DONOR MINORITY AWARENESS DAY IS AUGUST 1!