

Life Goes On

Secretary of State Jesse White • Summer 2021
A newsletter for Secretary of State facility employees and other organ/tissue donation advocates

NDLM April virtual campaign included donor choices

The Organ/Tissue Donor Program continued its outreach efforts this spring, increasing the Illinois Donor Registry to 7.1 million people. Despite the challenging year, the registry has continued to grow, thanks to those who have joined the registry in hopes of helping others someday.

We also celebrated National Donate Life Month in April with a virtual website campaign and by recognizing Driver Services facilities and their continued support of donation. The virtual campaign featured information on the three types of donation to educate people about their donor choices. Life Goes On polo shirts were distributed to all facility employees. In addition to the shirts, each facility received a Life Goes On flag to raise at facilities in April. Photos of many facility flag-raising events are inside this issue.

As Illinois opens up with more opportunities for community events and registration drives, we are excited for the chance to continue to grow the registry at a time of great need. Thank you for what you do every day to help shorten the waiting list for others.

Jesse White

Jesse White
Secretary of State

During National Donate Life Month (NDLM) in April, the Life Goes On website featured a virtual campaign aimed at informing people about the three types of donation available. Organ/tissue donation involves the giving of organs after a person dies. In Illinois, there are currently 4,000 individuals on waiting lists for organs which include hearts, livers, kidneys, lungs, pancreases and small intestines. Tissue transplantation enhances life for thousands of people each year, but does not involve a waiting list. Lives are made better by tissue transplants, such as corneas that restore sight, bones, skin, arteries, ligaments/tendons and heart valves.

Also included in the campaign was a section describing living donation, where an individual can donate a whole or partial organ to another individual while the donor is still alive. Whole body donation, another option, is when an individual donates his or her entire body to science for medical research and/or teaching purposes. The virtual campaign also featured a personal video message from Secretary of State Jesse White, and the April 2021 commercial featured former White Sox player and announcer Ed Farmer, a kidney recipient and donor advocate who died in April 2020.



NATIONAL DONATE LIFE MONTH

April was National Donate Life Month.
[Visit our virtual campaign.](#)

WHITE SOX ED FARMER

Be an **ALL-STAR**

Register today

JESSE WHITE
SECRETARY OF STATE

Facilities celebrated during April events

Driver Services facilities throughout Illinois were another focus of the donor program's National Donate Life Month activities in April. To thank facility employees for their support of the donor program, each employee was given a Life Goes On (LGO) blue polo shirt. Employees watched a short donor refresher presentation that provided updated information and statistics about the program and debunked myths and misconceptions surrounding donation.

Each facility was presented with a Life Goes On flag to display. On April 16, National Blue and Green Day, a day of national observation for organ and tissue donation within workplaces, employees were asked to wear their shirts and conduct a small flag-raising ceremony at facilities across the state. Donor program coordinators attended many of these events, and facility employees gathered for photos to commemorate the occasion. The flags are permanently displayed within all facilities as a reminder to customers to consider registering as donors.

While we could not feature every photo submitted, many facilities were decorated in blue and green colors—employees hung streamers, wore blue and green or their polo shirts, brought in special food, had small giveaways for customers and took photos of staff members.

Attending the Chicago North Driver Services facility flag-raising event was two-time cornea recipient and Chicago resident Alan Kravets. He also serves on the advisory board at Eversight. Alan, who was a featured speaker at the event, was very pleased to see the Chicago North facility dedicated to promoting organ and tissue donation during National Blue and Green Day.

"It's great to see the Secretary of State's office go above and beyond promoting organ donation," Alan said. "It's the first thing you see when you walk into the facility. I love the team spirit in the facilities. Everyone is working together." According to Alan, donation is the easiest way to make a difference in someone's life. Because of his donor's generous decision, Alan now has restored eyesight, a gift for which he is forever grateful.

FACILITIES RAISE FLAGS



for Donor Awareness

Eighth-grader decorates school fence with blue and green ribbons

Chicago eighth-grader Katherine "Kackie" Talmers, 13, says that one of the best days of her life was when her grandmother received a lifesaving liver transplant in 2015. Though she was only 7 years old at the time, Kackie, along with her sister Helen, understood that her grandmother needed a lifesaving gift so she would no longer be sick. Now, as a student at Oscar Mayer Magnet School in Chicago, Kackie wanted to do something to bring awareness to the need for more donors – so others could receive a lifesaving gift like her grandmother.

In April, Kackie decided that her donor awareness project would be to tie blue and green ribbons on the fence surrounding Oscar Mayer Magnet School in Chicago, one ribbon for each person on the transplant waiting list in Illinois. Kackie looked up the exact number of individuals on the waiting list at the beginning of her project and began cutting 4,027 pieces of ribbon to fasten to the fence.

"She really enjoyed it," said Kackie's mother, Leah Talmers. "They were working remotely at school, and on breaks, she would use the time to install ribbons. Then she'd go back later in the day and do more."

It took Kackie a total of 10 days to complete the blue and green ribbon pattern on the fence, but nothing, including various weather conditions, deterred her from completing the installation. When Kackie's grandmother, Leslie Zeller, arrived from Dalton, Georgia, to see the display, she was very moved that her granddaughter had done this in honor of her liver transplant.

"I felt like a visual (display) was easy for people to understand," said Kackie. "More young people are attracted by the fence. This is more than just a number. There is a whole community of people waiting."

Kackie wrote a letter to Secretary White detailing her ribbon project, complete with photos. In her letter, she explained she had made a sign to go on the fence and had even included a QR code so people could register their donor decision at the site.

Kackie explained that it was a hard time prior to her grandmother's transplant, but she was grateful for the outcome and for the selfless act of another person.

Kackie intends to continue to promote donor awareness wherever she can. She and Helen have continued their donor awareness projects and have no plans to stop.



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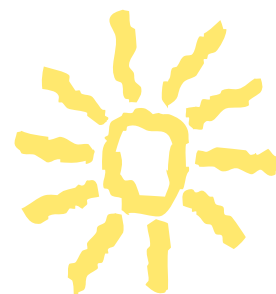
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