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The Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry has reached 3 million registrants! We had a phenomenal 2007, educating the public about organ/tissue donation and the importance of joining the new registry.

The new registry is no longer the best-kept secret in Illinois! Thanks to those who have worked hard each and every day telling people about the registry.

Even though the holidays are over, the giving spirit lives on in the hearts of those who have registered to be donors. We thank you for what your decision means to those waiting for lifesaving transplants.

A special thanks to facility staff who are on the front lines of our donor efforts. Your job isn’t always easy, but your efforts have made a huge difference. Everyone waiting for a transplant or who has a loved one waiting thanks you.

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LIFE GOES ON. BE AN ORGAN/TISSUE DONOR.

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“...It's important to know that the number of people on the waiting list for a transplant is up to 25,000, and only a fraction are reported in the media, but those few are usually heartwarming and special. Following are a few stories that got some positive media attention in the past year: • In Chicago, 10-year-old twin sisters made medical history when they became the first twins to each receive a kidney from a single donor on the same day. The surgery took place at Children’s Memorial Hospital. The twins suffered from a rare genetic condition called cystinosis. Both girls are healthy and doing well post-surgery.

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National Donor Sabbath celebrated

National Donor Sabbath, a time for clergy and worshippers to come together for an organ/tissue donor recognition weekend across the state and throughout the nation, was observed the second weekend in November 2007. Many volunteers, donor staff, transplant recipients and donor families encouraged their clergy and religious leaders to talk about donation for a few minutes during worship services and distributed donor materials.

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"We really enjoyed producing an effective, short radio commercial to spread the word about donation throughout many communities during National Donor Sabbath," said Secretary of State Jesse White. "The importance of donation cannot be stressed enough at this important time."

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Organ/tissue donation "good news" stories are all around. Of the 25,000 successful transplants performed in the United States each year, only a fraction are reported in the media, but those few are usually heartwarming and special. Following are a few stories that got some positive media attention in the past year:

- In Chicago, 10-year-old twin sisters made medical history when they became the first twins to each receive a kidney from a single donor on the same day. The surgery took place at Children's Memorial Hospital. The story reported that normally the kidneys from a single donor go to different recipients, but the mother of the twin girls would have had a hard time caring for one girl recovering from her transplant while the other one still had to go to dialysis. She also said she didn't know how she would have chosen which daughter to get the first kidney when both needed one badly. The twins suffered from a rare genetic condition called cystinosis. Both girls are healthy and doing well post-surgery.
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DONOR DRIVE AT COLLEGE OF DUPage — Donor Program regional coordinator Margaret Pearson (left) and Colette Jordan, president of Students for Organ Donation at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, staffed a donor drive at the college recently. Colette is a volunteer with Donate Life Illinois and received a liver transplant in November 2006.

How many people are on the national waiting list for a lifesaving transplant?

The United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), which oversees the distribution of organs in the United States, reports 98,096 people on the waiting list — nearly 75,000 waiting for a kidney and more than 16,000 waiting on a liver.

How many people received transplants in the United States in 2007?

According to UNOS, 28,352 transplants were performed in 2007.

How many people have donated their organs while alive, and what organs can living donors donate?

In 2007, UNOS reported 14,393 total donors in this country, with 8,000+ being deceased donors and 6,000+ being living donors. Living donors may donate one lung, one kidney or part of a liver, which is the only organ that grows back. Living pancreas donations also are being done.

I've recently heard about "blood type compatibility" between donor and recipient. What does that mean?

Traditionally, blood type between donor and recipient has had to match exactly for a successful transplant. However, some blood types are "compatible" with others, which will make transplantation successful. For example, if a living donor's blood type is type "O," that donor may donate organs to recipients with blood types "O," "A," "B" or "AB." In addition to blood typing, many other tests are performed to determine compatibility between donor and recipient.

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Benjamin Sims recorded a commercial on behalf of the Secretary of State for Donor Sabbath. The 11-year-old from Tower Hill received a heart transplant when he was just five days old.

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Firsts in Donation

1954

1958

1961

1962

1967

1968

1977

1983

1986

1987

1988

1989

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