Be A Hero! gearing up for repeat success in 2015

Donor Program staff is gearing up for the second annual Be A Hero! campaign in 2015! The success of last year’s program was encouraging with three Illinois communities being awarded prizes for their creative and innovative donor campaign awareness campaigns. Elgin Community College in Elgin (northern IL), Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield (central IL) and Olney Community College in Olney (southern IL) were each awarded a summer internship for one winning student.

New this year, one winning school from each of the three geographic areas will be awarded a monetary scholarship for the student who has gone above and beyond in their college’s campaign. Be A Hero! materials are available on the Life Goes On website, which explains the campaign rules and regulations in detail. The goal of the challenge is to engage students on their campuses and communities bringing awareness to their fellow students, faculty and staff about the importance of donation. Students are encouraged to “think outside the box” and to create and implement activities that bring awareness to their communities.

DONOR FACTS — Test your donation I.Q.

QUESTION: I’m too old to be a donor. Who would want my organs and tissue?

FACT: You are NEVER too old to be a donor! Many older Americans donate their corneas or numerous tissue if they are unable to be an organ donor. Register to be a donor and let the doctors at the time of death make the decision.

QUESTION: I’m certain my religion wouldn’t allow me to be a donor.

FACT: All major eastern and western religions allow donation if that is the individual’s wish. Religious leaders, while leaving the decision up to the individual, agree that donation is the most generous act one can bestow.

QUESTION: I want an open casket at my funeral. I’m sure I can’t be a donor if I want to be viewed.

FACT: There are no visible signs of donation so individuals wanting an open casket at their funerals can have one. The donation process is a respectful surgical procedure. Nothing that would be viewed (face, hands, neck) is touched. Your clothing covers your surgical incisions.

QUESTION: I’m sure my family cannot afford for me to become a donor. I don’t want to burden them more.

FACT: There is absolutely no cost to your family if you are a donor. Organ and tissue transplants are gifts and they are freely given to those who are in critical need.

QUESTION: I’m pretty sure I heard that doctors will not try to save you if they know you are a donor.

FACT: That is completely false. This is the number one myth circulating about donation. Don’t buy into the myths. Emergency and trauma doctors try to save lives—that’s what they do. Only after everything has been done to save a person is the family approached about donation. Life-saving doctors and transplantation doctors are completely separate types of physicians. A trauma physician has nothing to do with transplantation, and a transplant doctor has nothing to do with emergency care.

QUESTION: How many people have signed up to be donors in Illinois?

FACT: Illinois has more than 5.7 million potential donors on the donor registry. However, each year 200 people in Illinois die waiting for a transplant. Sign up to be a donor today.

A brand new year has begun, and with it comes the opportunity to begin again. That’s what transplantation offers — the chance for thousands of people to begin again. We look forward to another banner year with the donor program after a very active 2014, spreading the word about the importance of the life-saving benefit of transplantation. Donor Program staff members were busy coordinating activities for National Donor Sabbath (NDS) weekend throughout the state in November. A press conference held Nov. 14 served as a kick-off event for several donor events at houses of worship in Illinois, many of which I attended.

Our 2015 Be A Hero! campaign is gearing up for spring, with program staff again reaching out to local community colleges encouraging creative donor awareness campaigns designed to increase the donor registry.

As always, thank you for your work you do every day at the 138 driver service facilities across Illinois. Making a difference in another person’s life should be our goal for the New Year.

Jesse White
Secretary of State

A quilt square remembering Vikki Tulcus, a coordinator for Springfield’s Life Goes On Committee decorated a holiday tree in honor of donation. The tree, purchased by Henson Robinson Co. this year, was auctioned off to benefit health related projects and programs at Memorial Health System and in the Springfield community.

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National Donor Sabbath (NDS) was held the weekend of Nov. 14-16, 2014 at houses of worship across Illinois and the country to stress the importance of organ and tissue donation and the life-saving reality of transplantation. For many people who have been on waiting lists for months or even years, those gifts of donation mean everything. For those individuals still on a waiting list, NDS provides the opportunity to share their stories with fellow worshippers and encourage donor registry participation.

“National Donor Sabbath is a time when we discuss donation at places of worship and encourage those directly affected by transplantation to share their stories,” said Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White. “The most important step an individual can take to ensure there are enough organs for those in need is to register as a donor,” he added.

Secretary White kicked off National Donor Sabbath weekend at a Chicago press conference with The First Ladies Initiative, pastors and donor advocates from area churches to show support for donation. The 2014 NDS theme, “Let the Music Continue for Others,” was a tribute to donors and their families.
National Donor Sabbath (cont. from pp. 1)

observed at several locations. Secretary White shared the donor message with visits on Nov. 16 to the Faith Community of Saint Sabina with Father Michael L. Pfieger, senior pastor and Thulani Mapeza, pastor; the Apostolic Church of God in Chicago with Dr. Byron T. Braizer; Jordan Temple Baptist Church in Hillside with Pastor Stephen Richardson; and World Deliverance Church in Hillside with Pastor Thomas Clark.

Numerous events were held around the state that weekend at places of worship, including First Baptist Church in Galatia and Mount Nebo Missionary Baptist Church in Madison. A Service of Remembrance ceremony for donor families was held at Springfield's Southwind Park and a special mass was celebrated at St. Mary's Hospital in Decatur for members of the Macon County Life Goes On Committee. Fourth Street United Methodist Church in Aurora celebrated National Donor Sabbath the following week with a donor registration drive and presentation.

Customer Service Week awards

Many facilities and other secretary of state departments throughout Illinois celebrated Customer Service Week held October 6–10, 2014. Staff had fun decorating their workplaces, offering refreshments, setting up informational tables and giving treats to customers. This is a week for employees to thank the thousands of Illinois residents who pass through one of the state’s 138 driver services facilities and Secretary of State offices annually. Many facility staff dressed up in costumes or wore Donate Life shirts, showing solidarity for donation at the counters.

Winners of Customer Service Week awards are:

First Place for larger departments (13+ employees): Schaumburg Driver Services facility
Second Place for smaller departments (1-12 employees): Pano Driver Services facility
Second Place for larger departments: Secretary of State Police
Third Place for larger departments: Benton Driver Services facility
Third Place for small departments: DeKalb Driver Services facility

In addition, 28 other departments received Certificates of Excellence for Customer Service recognition. Congratulations to all who participated. We hope you enjoy the photos below.
Donor Program Assistant Manager Sitha Hun Recognized

Named August 2014 Employee of the Month

Sitha Hun, assistant manager of the Organ/Tissue Donor Program, was named Employee of the Month for August 2014 and was honored at a reception held in the atrium of the Illinois State Library in Springfield on Nov. 21. Secretary of State Jesse White presented Sitha with a plaque and a personalized Blue Book. “Sitha has stepped up to the challenge of assisting in the management of this life saving program,” said Secretary White. “We are lucky to have him on board.” Many of Sitha’s current and past co-workers as well as his family members attended the ceremony. The library was decorated with the Organ/Tissue Donor Program colors, and a Life Goes On cake was served to mark the occasion. Congratulations on a job well done, Sitha.

National Donor Sabbath

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Employee Connection

For Paul Ponzio of the Lombard facility, the best day in his life came 21 years ago when his sister became a living kidney donor to him. Paul was diagnosed with end-stage renal failure when he was only 38 years old. Up until that time he had been a healthy and active individual, owning his own business, participating in sports and enjoying life with his family. When doctors told him that the best course of action was a kidney transplant, Paul was placed on the national waiting list. As the weeks went by and Paul did not receive a kidney, his family began looking into the possibility of living donation. Two of his sisters began the testing process to see if either matched Paul. His sister, Teddy, was found to be a perfect match. In fact, Paul’s doctors told his family that only an identical twin would have been a better match for him. After Paul’s surgery in September 1993 at Loyola Medical Center in Maywood, Illinois, Paul woke up with a perfectly functioning kidney and 21 years later is still doing well.

“Since my surgery there is not a day that goes by that I am not grateful for this second chance,” Paul said. “I celebrated my 35th wedding anniversary this year and enjoy a wonderful life with family and friends.” He is forever grateful for his sister’s gift that allows him to continue to go boating, travel, play golf and be active.

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

LIFE GOES ON, BE AN ORGAN/TISSUE DONOR.
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