National Donor Sabbath was celebrated Nov. 10-12, 2017, throughout the state and country. This annual three-day observance encourages clergy and worship leaders to speak about organ and tissue donation to their congregations. Those who have received transplants, are currently waiting or are members of donor families come forward to share their stories with church members in an effort to raise awareness about the need for organ/tissue donors.

“The need for more donors in Illinois is critical,” said Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White. “On National Donor Sabbath weekend, we encourage clergy to address their congregation about the importance of organ and tissue donation. I visited three churches in Chicago on Nov. 12 to raise awareness about the organ/tissue program and reiterate that donation saves lives.”

In honor of National Donor Sabbath, Secretary White held a press conference on Nov. 9 at the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago. Secretary White was joined by clergy, members of the First Ladies Health Initiative of Chicago, transplant recipients, staff from The Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, as well as other donor advocates. Secretary White highlighted the need for more donors in Illinois. Monson and Rachel Angela Moore, a heart recipient and kidney donor, were also invited to speak at the press conference. Secretary White emphasized the importance of donation and the impact it can have on people’s lives.

Our office had many opportunities to promote organ/tissue donation last autumn. The observance of National Donor Sabbath took center stage for the donor program. We encouraged everyone to spread the message about the importance of organ and tissue donation and to register as donors.

As always, I am grateful to the employees of every driver services facility in the state for asking customers to participate in the donation program. We can significantly increase the state’s registry and provide more options for those on the wait list by asking each individual this important question. You are helping us make a difference.

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National Donor Sabbath events observed throughout Illinois

Donor program coordinators traveled across the state distributing National Donor Sabbath flyers and bookmarks. They also coordinated with churches to provide donor informational tables and programs. A 30-second National Donor Sabbath Public Service Announcement, featuring Chicago kidney recipient Dave Eccleston and kidney recipient Darcey Monson, was also played on 100 radio stations throughout the state.

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Concordia University welcomes Secretary White
Students presented with inspiring message of donation

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Donor John Lefferts was remembered on DLA’s 2018 Rose Parade float

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In Dixon, National Donor Sabbath was celebrated at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church by Father Romke. A parishioner had recently lost her daughter who had made the selfless decision to act as a donor. A donor informational table was set up at the church. In East St. Louis, Superintendent Rodney Douglas Sr. and First Lady Anita Douglas of Greater New Covenant Church of God in Christ observed National Donor Sabbath with a donor presentation during their church’s Thanksgiving dinner for the community on Nov. 19. Reverend Silas Johnson of Calvary Missionary Baptist Church in Springfield observed Donor Sabbath by emphasizing the need for more organ donors in the African-American community.

In Decatur on Nov. 9, HSHS St. Mary’s Hospital and the Macon County Life Goes On Committee recognized donor families, recipients and those waiting for a donor with a special program in honor of National Donor Sabbath. The service featured the lighting of candles to represent donor families, those in need, recipients of organs and tissue, as well as health care providers. Father Nick Husain, chaplain at St. Mary’s, offered the blessing of the candles and prayer. Also supporting and participating in the service were Joan Coffman, president and CEO of HSHS St. Mary’s Hospital; Macon County Life Goes On Committee members; and Michelle Reef, regional manager of hospital development for Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network. Thousands of National Donor Sabbath flyers and bookmarks were distributed throughout Champaign and Decatur to raise awareness about organ and tissue donation.

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The state’s donor registry will be impacted significantly this year because 16- and 17-year-olds are now eligible to participate in the program. As of Jan. 1, all 16- and 17-year-olds are asked if they wish to join the donor registry when they receive their driver’s license or state ID. This has the potential to add more than 350,000 additional names annually to the state’s registry.

As always, I am grateful to the employees of every driver services facility in the state for asking customers to participate in the donor program hundreds of times each day. We can significantly increase the state’s registry and provide more options for those on the wait list by asking each individual this important question. You are helping us make a difference.

Jesse White
Secretary of State