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As of December 2018, 54,000 16- and 17-year-olds have registered their donor decisions. The number continues to climb as teens become more aware of the program and the fact that they can make their own decisions at age 16 and 17. Many teens cite the ability to make a difference in the lives of others as what fueled their decisions to sign up. The teens who have known someone with a transplant, sometimes within their own families, share those stories with their classmates and encourage their peers to participate.

As always, a heartfelt thank you to those at the facility level who make an effort to register new individuals each day across the state. Every ‘yes’ from a customer has the potential to save several lives down the road. The Illinois Donor Registry stands at 6.6 million individuals thanks to your help. Let’s keep the momentum going!

Jesse White
Secretary of State

Life Goes On.
Be An Organ/Tissue Donor.

Printed by authority of the State of Illinois. January 2019 — 2M — EX 34
kidney from Pastor Potete. "One of the core values of our church is servanthood, or serving others," Pastor Potete said. "I can't tell you how good it felt to help a friend."

Rev. Sanchez emphasized the fact that most major religions consider donation "a life-giving and charitable act." Rev. Sanchez survived the Aeromexico jetliner crash in the Mexican state of Durango in the summer of 2018. All 103 passengers made it out safely before the plane burst into flames. Rev. Sanchez, who had a badly broken arm, returned to the plane in the pouring rain to offer help to others. He knows what a close call all the passengers had that day.

Others supported Secretary White’s message, including Tracy Alston, First Ladies Health Initiative; Rev. Anthony McPherson, Mid-America Transplant Service; Shibu Peter, Chicago’s Indian community’s donor awareness coordinator; and staff from the Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, National Kidney Foundation of Illinois and Eversight Illinois.

Secretary White traveled to three Chicago-area churches on Nov. 11 to promote the message of donation to those in attendance. He recognized each of the churches with a plaque recognizing its support and efforts in support of organ/tissue donation. Pastor and heart recipient Stephen Richardson, of Jordan Temple Baptist Church in Hillside, welcomed Secretary White to speak to his congregation. Pastor Richardson, a two-time heart transplant recipient, received his first heart on Nov. 11, 1996, and his second heart in November 2013. He recently celebrated 25 years in the ministry. Pastor Clarence Stowers, of Mars Hill Baptist Church in Chicago, greeted Secretary White as the secretary spoke about donation at the church. Rock of Ages Baptist Church in Chicago also embraced Secretary White’s donor message with pastors Marvin Wiley and David Lowe supporting the Secretary’s efforts to raise awareness about National Donor Sabbath.

In Decatur, HSHS St. Mary’s Hospital hosted a National Donor Sabbath event on Nov. 9 to recognize donor families, recipients and those waiting for a donor match, as well as medical personnel involved with organ donation. A large crowd attended the candlelighting ceremony. The Irons family, of Maroa, participated in the observance. Gillian Irons, 13, is awaiting a second kidney transplant; her 6-year-old sister, Grace, is also waiting for a kidney.

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Employee Connection

Introducing donor program coordinator Gavin Dillon

For Gavin Dillon, 26, of Libertyville, life took an unexpected turn when he was in college. Not feeling well, he made several trips to the doctor and was finally diagnosed with the liver disease Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC). This is the same liver disease that the late Chicago Bears great Walter Payton developed. Gavin struggled to finish college, and his disease advanced to the stage where he needed a liver transplant. Luckily he was notified that there was a whole liver available to him from a deceased donor.

At age 23, two-and-a-half years ago, Gavin received his gift from a 21-year-old donor. The transplant was performed at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago in April 2016. Gavin reached out to the father of his donor and they have since met. His donor’s father shared stories about his son and is happy to know that Gavin’s life was restored by his son’s liver. Gavin has been with the Secretary of State’s donor program for more than six months, making donor awareness presentations to high school driver’s education students, staffing donor tables at health fairs and speaking about his personal transplant story.

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Secretary of State Jesse White, left, presents Hillside’s Jordan Temple Baptist Church pastor Stephen Richardson, left, a heart recipient, with a plaque of appreciation for his church’s support of organ and tissue donation during National Donor Sabbath.

Gillian Irons, of Maroa, lights a candle at HSHS St. Mary’s Hospital as a part of their National Donor Sabbath event on Nov. 9 in Decatur. Gillian and her 6-year-old sister, Grace, are both on dialysis awaiting kidney transplants.

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High school driver’s education students on board with donation

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