



# Life Goes On

Secretary of State Jesse White • Winter 2013

A newsletter for Secretary of State facility employees and other organ/tissue donation advocates

## Illinois' donor registry celebrates 20-year milestone

As we usher in the New Year, I want to applaud our accomplishments and milestones of 2012. At the top of the list is the 20th anniversary of Illinois' donor registry. Since its inception in October 1992, this office has built a strong and visible Organ/Tissue Donor Program with the help of dedicated staff, volunteers and partners in the donor community. As a result, the donor registry now has more than 5 million potential donors.

This fall the Donor Program received two awards from the AAMVA for marketing campaigns: one for an article in the *Life Goes On* newsletter and another for our counter mat displays in facilities. Accolades go out to all those involved in producing these creative outlets to promote donor awareness.

Throughout the year staff also participated in multiple health fair opportunities and our community college program has been a huge success.

On a sad note, our very dear friend and Donor Program employee Vikki Tulcus passed away this month. Vikki has been a valiant champion for those awaiting transplants and never lost her will in her own battle with kidney disease. She will be missed greatly by everyone who had the pleasure of knowing and working with this remarkable woman.

Plans are underway to make 2013 our best year yet for spreading the word about donation. I look forward to working with staff, volunteers and donor advocates to ensure that more people on the waiting list receive the gift of life.

*Jesse White*

Jesse White  
Secretary of State

Twenty years ago, the Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor Registry became a reality. On Oct. 1, 1992, the registry went online, becoming the first registry of its kind in the nation.

Implementing a computerized registry served many purposes. First and foremost, it allowed the office to determine how many people actually wanted to be designated a potential donor through the registry's database. It also provided a geographical profile of potential donors, which became important to promoting awareness about the critical need for donors.

At the end of 1992, the first query into the number of people in the registry was conducted. Twenty-two percent of all people visiting facilities had registered as donors. Each month the numbers continued to grow as customers were asked to join the registry and facility staff was trained in donation information.

In 1993, Live & Learn legislation was passed, which provided funding for the Organ/Tissue

Donor Program. This funding provided for materials, radio and television advertising and outreach activities across the state.

In 2004, Secretary of State Jesse White established a task force to look at the issue of "first-person consent." At the time, family or next-of-kin consent was required before a person could be a donor. At the recommendation of the task force, legislation was introduced and passed in June 2005, which established the new First Person Consent Registry. Effective Jan. 1, 2006, a person's wishes to be a donor became legally binding and family consent was no longer required for donors over age 18.

It is estimated that since the first-person consent law became effective, more than 100 additional lives have been saved each year. Today, more than 5 million people are registered as donors in Illinois. We thank all facility staff and donor advocates for all their hard work over the years to make Illinois' Organ/Tissue Donor Registry one of the largest and most successful registries in the nation.



**COLLEGE OF LAKE COUNTY**  
— The College of Lake County in Grayslake is the latest community college to take up Secretary of State Jesse White's appeal to register staff and students on the donor registry. The school is well on its way to register 150 donors in the New Year.

*\*Photo courtesy College of Lake County photographer Bob Booker.*

## Donor Program welcomes new manager, assistant manager

The Organ/Tissue Donor Program is pleased to welcome Connie Boatman as its new program manager. She replaces former manager Nadine O'Leary.

"Over the past 10 years, Nadine has steered the Organ/Tissue Donor Program to the success it is today," said Secretary of State Jesse White. "Our community outreach has improved, registry numbers have increased and awareness about the program is at an all-time high. We owe this in part to Nadine's stalwart leadership and commitment to the program. We wish her the very best in her new professional endeavors."

Connie comes to the Donor Program from the Vehicle Services Department. She holds a B.A. in health administration, and her professional experience spans more than 20 years in the fields of marketing and sales, event planning, managerial administration, and training and development.

Connie has had several family members and loved ones benefit from donation. She intends to maintain the integrity of the program by sustaining its relationship with Donate Life partners, expanding education efforts and further strengthening the donor registry.

Sitha Hun has been named assistant program manager. Sitha has been with the Donor Program 12 years, and his new duties include fiscal responsibilities and overseeing regional coordinator staff, training and development, the *Life Goes On* newsletter and the website.

"I have full faith in the commitment and dedication these two individuals have demonstrated," said Secretary White. "I congratulate Connie and Sitha on their efforts and look forward to working with them as we continue our education and outreach efforts on the lifesaving potential of donation."



Connie Boatman



Sitha Hun

## Vikki Tulcus memoriam



It is with deep regret and sorrow that the Organ/Tissue Donor Program staff announces the loss of a very dear friend, coworker and donor advocate, Vikki Tulcus. Vikki died of major organ failure on Jan. 9, 2013. Vikki was on the transplant list and awaiting a kidney.

Vikki was featured in the Secretary of State's 2012 donor commercial, where she said, "Before, my job depended on organ donation; now, my life depends on it."

"Vikki's lively spirit and enthusiasm will be greatly missed in the office and in the donor community," said Secretary of State Jesse White. "Vikki, who championed donation for years, has touched countless lives through her work and through her personal organ donation experience. Vikki had a giving spirit. Although Vikki died waiting for her gift of life, in the end, she continued advocating donation while she herself waited for a donor. I know that Vikki's legacy will live on as she continues to inspire others to become organ and tissue donors."

Vikki lived in the Chicago suburb of Westmont and held a master's degree in business from North Central College in Naperville. She began her career in organ/tissue donation with Gift of Hope in 2004. She started working for the Secretary of State's Donor Program in 2007 as an advocate for donation. She will be greatly missed.

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## Donor Program wins AAMVA awards

The Organ/Tissue Donor Program recently won two American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) PACE awards for top marketing campaigns.

A Public Affairs Award was given for the *Life Goes On* newsletter story, "Where Are They Now," published in spring 2011. The story featured Joseph Kralicek, the Secretary of State's first Organ Donor Poster Contest winner in 1991. The article discussed how transplantation benefited his father, Joe, who was on the waiting list for a liver transplant at the time Joseph entered the contest as an elementary school student. Joseph's artwork depicted a plea for a donor for his father. The poster was reprinted and displayed at Driver Services facilities as well as schools and libraries across the state.

A PACE Customer Awareness Award was given for the Donor Program's colorful, 10"x10" counter mats placed in facilities across the state. The mats feature an Illinois driver's license with the donor emblem highlighted as a reminder to customers to join the registry.

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## National Donor Sabbath celebrated in IL

Every year, two weekends before Thanksgiving, National Donor Sabbath is observed, a time when faith leaders are encouraged to discuss organ/tissue donation with their congregations. All major world religions embrace donation as a final, charitable act of giving.

This year during the weekend of November 9-11, transplant recipients, donor family members and those waiting for a transplant shared their inspiring stories with others in faith communities across the state. For more information about National Donor Sabbath, visit [organdonor.gov](http://organdonor.gov).



ABOVE LEFT: Father Gene Szarek, Father John Clemens and Secretary Jesse White promoted organ/tissue donation at Our Lady of Hope Church in Rosemont. ABOVE RIGHT: Ariel Fuller, Miss Black Chicago Southland USA 2013 and Miss Black Illinois runner-up joined the donor registry at Our Lady of Hope Church.



ABOVE LEFT: Virginia Holt of Carbondale, and her son, Craig, to whom she gave a kidney 21 years ago, shared their family's donor story at the Walnut Street Baptist Church in Carbondale. ABOVE RIGHT: Books about donation were donated to the Moweaqua Public Library in honor of donor Casey Williams. Left to right are Casey Williams Foundation Board member Barbara Collins, Casey's aunt, Chelbi Williams, mother Cheryl Swigert and Alicia Gullidge.



ABOVE LEFT: The Rev. Dr. Donald Wagner and Rosemary Captain, wife of a kidney recipient, joined Donor Program regional coordinator Damarius Blanks at St. Paul United Church of Christ in Lebanon. ABOVE RIGHT: Sixteen-year-old Ben Sims of Tower Hill distributed Donor Sabbath materials at his church. Ben received a heart transplant when he was just 5 days old.

## Employee Connection



Areli Franco

Areli Franco has always been registered as an organ/tissue donor. As an employee at the Joliet Driver Services facility, she asks the donor question many times a day and knows firsthand the importance of donation.

Areli's father, Alex, waited three years for a kidney and finally received one from a young woman. Areli's mother did not always believe in donation and was not in the registry. However, when her husband became ill and was on the waiting list, she understood the importance of being a donor. Alex's illness made her realize that donation is a gift and that her husband could have a second chance at life because of a generous donor.

Today, because of their personal experience, Areli's entire family supports donation and would like to meet the family of Alex's donor. "He is doing so well," said Areli. "We would love to meet the family to say thank you in person.

"I tell people how important their gift could be to someone else. I know when someone says 'yes' in the facility, that as many as 25 people can be helped."

### It's easy to join the Organ/Tissue Donor Registry:

- Visit [LifeGoesOn.com](http://LifeGoesOn.com) (it only takes 60 seconds to register online).
- Visit any Driver Services facility and say "yes" to the donor question.
- Call the Organ/Tissue Donor Program hotline at 800-210-2106.
- Complete and mail the registration card on the "It's Up To YOU" brochure.

**AN ORGAN/TISSUE DONOR.**



**FESTIVAL OF TREES** — Secretary of State Jesse White with the holiday tree decorated by the Springfield Life Goes On Committee for Springfield's Memorial Medical Center's Festival of Trees. More than 30,000 people attend the weeklong event each year. The committee's tree was purchased by PEC Mobile Communications Inc.



Woodstock facility staff promoted donor awareness during Secretary of State Customer Service Week. Standing left to right are Marci Letheby, Pam Brockman, Kevin Molloy and Patty Robertson. Seated is Donor Program regional coordinator Jan Eschen.

## Transplant pioneer dies

Dr. Joseph E. Murray, a pioneer in the field of transplantation and a Nobel Prize-winning physician, recently died at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, the same hospital where he performed the first kidney transplant on Dec. 23, 1954. He was 93.

Murray's pioneering transplant procedure — removing a healthy kidney from a 23-year-old living donor and giving it to his identical twin brother who was suffering from kidney failure — was a groundbreaking surgery at the time.

Dr. Murray was the director of the Surgical Research Library at Harvard Medical School and Brigham. He continued to perform transplants on twin patients before branching out to non-related patients and deceased donors years later. He also advanced the field of cosmetic surgery, tissue/skin transplants and reconstruction, which he learned from his years in the U.S. Army.

Despite many physicians telling him to abandon transplantation as unfounded folly, he continued transplanting kidneys in dogs until he had perfected the procedure and agreed to perform the surgery on the twin brothers in 1954. In his book, Dr. Murray later wrote, "There was a collective hush in the operating room" as the new kidney began to work immediately. The rest, as they say, is transplantation history!

(Source: *New York Times*, Nov. 27, 2012)

## Customer Service Week celebrated at facilities

Many facilities throughout Illinois celebrated Secretary of State Customer Service Week in early October. It was a time for facility staff to thank customers for their business throughout the year. Some facilities offered themed days such as "Crazy Hat Day," "Donor Designation Day," or days where all employees wore their "Donate Life" blue polo shirts. Facilities were judged on creativity and enthusiasm. Following are the winners of this year's Customer Service Week. Congratulations to everyone who participated!

### Workplaces with 12 or fewer employees:

**First place** — Tie between Plano and Wheaton Express facilities

**Second Place** — Greenville and Watseka facilities

**Third Place** — Gibson City facility

### Workplaces with 13 or more employees:

**First Place** — Woodstock facility

**Second Place** — Chicago West facility

**Third Place** — Tie between Business Services Chicago Office and Waukegan facility