

# Life Goes On

Secretary of State Jesse White • Winter 2017

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

## National Donor Sabbath focuses on churches

A new year provides renewed opportunities to spread the word about the lifesaving gift of organ/tissue donation. The mission in 2017 is increasing donor enrollment beyond the state's current 6.1 million registrants. Donor staff will be creating additional opportunities to sign up individuals throughout Illinois. Please look for donor registration tables at upcoming events in your communities. We invite you to share these occasions with your family, friends and neighbors.

The annual National Donor Sabbath took place on Nov. 13, 2016, and we were so pleased with its success. I enjoyed the opportunity to visit several Chicago-area churches and speak to hundreds of churchgoers. This year we held a National Donor Sabbath press conference at one of the churches I visited. This was a new addition to the yearly celebration, and I was honored to help continue my mission of raising awareness about organ donation.

Additionally, thanks to all of the facility staff members across the state for their dedication and commitment to inquiring about organ/tissue donation hundreds of times each day to visitors in each of our driver services facilities in 2016. You make a huge impact in the lives of others. I look forward to an even more successful effort in 2017!

*Jesse White*

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Secretary of State

On Nov. 10, to recognize and honor National Donor Sabbath, a press conference featuring Secretary White and Pastor Joseph Kyles, a lung recipient, was held at Pastor Kyles' church, The Promise Church, in Chicago. The press conference was attended by those who focus the local spotlight on donation: Secretary of State donor staff, Gift of Hope faculty, recipients and donor advocates. Also in attendance were: heart recipient Pam Morris-Walton, donor family member Ann Gullota, the Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation, as well as other faith leaders.

National Donor Sabbath is an interfaith celebration aimed at educating religious communities about the benefits of organ/tissue donation. Many worship leaders throughout the country advocate for donation during National Donor Sabbath weekend which was observed Nov. 11-13, 2016. During the Nov. 10 press conference, Secretary White explained that "People often cite religious beliefs as a reason for not signing up to be donors. The people here show how

donation touches the lives of many, including those in our faith communities."

Pastor Kyles was diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis disease prior to receiving a double lung transplant in February 2016. Pam Morris-Walton, a gospel radio host at Chicago radio station WVON, received a heart transplant in August 2016. Kyles and Morris-Walton were each featured in a 60-second public service announcement as proponents of organ and tissue donation. The PSA was distributed to radio stations statewide. Both spoke of the miracle of their lifesaving gifts and encouraged all to register as donors if they had not already done so.

In addition to the press conference, Secretary White traveled to four Chicago churches on National Donor Sabbath Sunday to spread the positive message about organ/tissue donation. The churches visited include Mount Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago with Rev. Dr. Marshall Elijah Hatch; The Promise Church

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Secretary White speaks at a National Donor Sabbath press conference Nov. 10 at The Promise Church in Chicago. Joining him are left to right: First Lady Chrystal Kyles, Pastor Joseph Kyles, lung recipient; Pam Morris-Walton, heart recipient; Pam's husband Frank Walton; Ann Gullota, donor family member; Secretary White; Jack Lynch, Gift of Hope's African American Task Force; Leilah Sampson, recipient, Gift of Hope; and Anne Black, National Kidney Foundation of Illinois.

# Six-year-old receives kidney transplant

## Family featured in National Donor Sabbath PSA in 2014

Grace Irons, a lively six-year-old from Maroa, received a kidney transplant the week of Christmas 2016, thanks to a generous donor. She is the daughter of Mike and Leslie Irons. Grace was diagnosed with glomerulocystic kidney disease as an infant. Grace's older sister, Gillian, now 11, is back on the waiting list for another kidney transplant after receiving one when she was just 3 years old. Another type of kidney disease called MPGN attacked Gillian's transplanted kidney.

But thanks to the lifesaving gift from a donor, Grace is resuming the life of a typical kindergartner. Grace requested a cherry slushy after her three hour surgery Dec. 12, 2016, at St. Louis Children's hospital. She was released from the hospital after a relatively short stay. She went home on Dec. 21, 2016, just in time to enjoy Christmas with her family.

"Mike and I are incredibly thankful for Grace's donor and his or her family. It was such a bittersweet day knowing another family lost a loved one, but we are so grateful Grace was getting the gift of life," Leslie said.



Secretary White is joined by the Irons family from Maroa at a September St. Louis Cardinals game. Leslie Irons, left, and Grace (who received a kidney in December 2016) and her sister Gillian, who is currently waiting for a second kidney transplant cheered on the Cardinals.



Six-year-old Grace Irons, of Maroa, hugs a stuffed animal before her kidney transplant in December 2016 at St. Louis Children's Hospital.

# National Donor Sabbath (cont. from pg. 1)

with Pastor Kyles; Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church with Bishop Joseph Jones; and Friendship Baptist Church with Pastor Reginald E. Bachus.

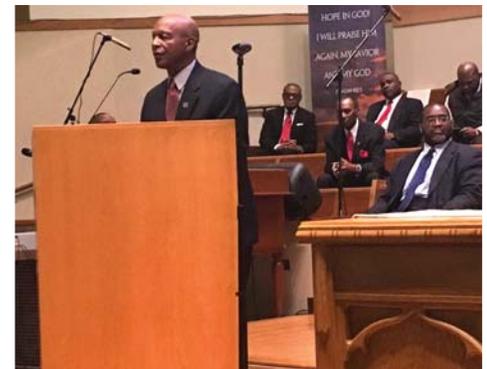
In Springfield, a memorial was held in honor of National Donor Sabbath at Springfield's Southwind Park for the dedication of the Gift of Hope Donor Family Memorial. Kevin Cmunt, CEO of Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network, spoke at the event that was attended by many Gift of Hope staff, donor advocates and donor family members. St. John Missionary Baptist Church in Centreville observed National Donor Sabbath with the story of church member Willie Liddell receiving a kidney from his son, Antoine. Pastor Jerry L. Wilson was happy to have Willie share his transplant journey.



LEFT: Secretary White presents Rev. Dr. Joseph Jones of Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church in Chicago a plaque recognizing his church's commitment to organ/tissue donation during National Donor Sabbath on Nov. 13. RIGHT: An organ/tissue donor display encouraging worshipers to consider donation at Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church in Chicago during National Donor Sabbath Nov. 13.



LEFT: In Springfield, a memorial was held at Springfield's Southwind Park for the dedication of the Gift of Hope Donor Family Memorial during National Donor Sabbath. Kevin Cmunt, CEO of Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network, spoke at the event that was attended by dozens of donor advocates, recipients and family members. RIGHT: Addressing a congregation at Friendship Baptist church on National Donor Sabbath, Secretary White encourages the congregants to sign up to be donors.



LEFT: Secretary White presenting a plaque to Pastor Marshall Hatch at New Mt. Pilgrim Missionary Baptist church on National Donor Sabbath. CENTER: St. John's Baptist Missionary Church in Centreville observes National Donor Sabbath with the story of church member Willie Liddell, right, receiving a kidney from his son, Antoine. Pastor Jerry L. Wilson, left, was happy to have Willie share his transplant journey. RIGHT: A bagpiper plays *Amazing Grace* as the Gift of Hope Donor Family Memorial was dedicated in Springfield during National Donor Sabbath.

## Secretary White throws out first pitch at Cardinals game

Secretary White was the guest of honor at a St. Louis Cardinals baseball game Sept. 13, 2016, for Organ/Tissue Donor Night. The Secretary threw out the first pitch prior to the game. He was joined for the game by Leslie, Gillian and Grace Irons of Moroa. Grace received her kidney transplant in December 2016. Lung recipient Janice Earl and her mother, Doris, also attended as guests of Secretary White.



ABOVE: Secretary White throws out the first pitch during Organ/Tissue Donor Night at a St. Louis Cardinals game in September. INSET: Janice Earl, lung recipient, left, and her mother, Doris, join Secretary White for Organ/Tissue Donor Night at a St. Louis Cardinals game in September.

## Donate Life 2017 Rose Parade float honored

### Wins Isabella Coleman Award

The 2017 Donate Life Rose Parade float, a tradition for Donate Life since 2004, won the Isabella Coleman award for best presentation of color and harmony through the use of floral arrangements. The parade was held in Pasadena, California, on Monday, Jan. 2, 2017, and featured dozens of creative floats representing a variety of themes and organizations. This year's Donate Life float theme, Treasure Life's Journey, brought awareness to the life saving act of organ and tissue donation. Donor program regional coordinator Liz Hager, of Taylorville, was invited to participate in the parade's activities on behalf of an anonymous benefactor. Liz attended a multitude of events leading up to the parade and met many recipients and donor families during her stay. "It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for me," she expressed. Congratulations to Donate Life America for such a beautiful entry.



Donate Life America's 2017 Rose Parade float featured the theme Treasure Life's Journey. Donate Life America has entered a float in the New Year's Day parade since 2004.

## Organ transplants at record high last year

### United Network for Organ Sharing reports lifesaving year

The United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) has reported a record number of transplants performed last year. In 2016, 33,606 successful organ transplants were performed in the country, an 8.5 percent increase over 2015 and nearly 20 percent more than just five years ago. UNOS noted that, sadly, with the increase in drug overdoses, more donations were available. Additionally, UNOS noted there have been fewer donor disqualifications in the last few years, which increased the organ pool for those waiting. Doctors continue to closely evaluate the viability of a donor organ for transplant, but many more organs are now being utilized than they were years ago. Of 33,606 transplants performed last year, 82 percent were from deceased donors (27,628) while 18 percent of transplants were from living donors (nearly 6,000).

### 2016 Donor Program Staff list

To reach a donor program staff member, please email them directly or call 800-210-2106 (Toll-free hotline).

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**LIFE GOES ON.**

**BE AN ORGAN/TISSUE DONOR.**

## Driver Services facilities, LGO committee display holiday spirit

Facilities and Springfield LGO committee members got creative throughout the state by showcasing their holiday spirit and setting up displays inside their facilities. Customers were treated to colorful holiday trees, faux fireplaces, snow-covered villages and strings of glittery paper cutouts with employees' names on them. Also contributing to the holiday spirit was the Springfield Life Goes On Committee and its holiday tree for the annual Memorial Medical Center's Festival of Trees charity event. The trees are auctioned off to various businesses in and around the Springfield area and the proceeds are donated to charity.



LEFT: The Springfield Life Goes On Committee members decorated a holiday tree for Springfield's Memorial Medical Center's Festival of Trees event. The trees are auctioned off to various businesses in the area and the proceeds are donated. RIGHT: The Plano Driver Services facility staff got into the holiday spirit by decorating a tree in the facility.



LEFT: This holiday tree, decorated by staff, adorned the Deerfield Driver Services facility for patrons to enjoy. RIGHT: The Waukegan Driver Services facility staff set up a holiday tree and a winter scene in the facility.

## Tissue transplants improve quality of life for millions

### Restore sight, mobility and reduce pain

For more than a million people each year, the gift of a tissue transplant is a life-changing event. Many times individuals suffer acute pain and reduced mobility with tears or strains in soft or connective tissue or have a need for joint replacements or limb-saving measures. Many require vein replacements to restore circulation, aortic heart valve replacement or cornea transplants that restore vision. When we consider donation, it tends to be the need for lifesaving organ transplants; however, the less frequently discussed tissue transplants can be just as life changing for those who suffer in need.

Many differences exist between organ transplants and tissue transplants. The most noted could be that many tissues can be recovered and preserved for use at a later time. There is less of a waiting list for those who require donor tissue than for those awaiting an organ transplant. Organs must be transplanted quickly, with every hour taken into consideration. Many tissues can be preserved and banked for longer periods of time, though generally they must be recovered within 24 hours of the donor's death.

Tissue transplants significantly improve life for 1.5 million people annually. One of the most commonly transplanted tissues is the cornea of the eye. The cornea is the dime-sized clear window covering the front of the eye. A recovered cornea looks similar to a contact lens. Trauma and numerous eye diseases may cause corneas to cloud over, blurring or preventing vision altogether. The gift of a cornea transplant restores sight and helps individuals live a higher quality of life.

Other tissues that can be transplanted include skin grafts to aid healing in burn and trauma victims. The grafts prevent infection in patients while their own skin heals underneath. Veins can be donated to people who have lost circulation in limbs and around the heart. Bone transplants also aid in preventing amputation and help individuals with joint replacement surgeries and mobility issues.

A common tissue transplant is the heart's aortic valve. The human heart has four chambers and four heart valves that open and close and prevent blood from flowing backwards from each chamber. Of the four heart valves, the aortic valve can be replaced directing the flow of blood correctly.

There are two options for aortic valve replacement: tissue valves (from a deceased person or from one of two animals) and mechanical valves.

The tissue valve is the less common procedure of the two according to Donate Life America. A tissue valve can be an option from either a deceased donor or constructed from a pig valve (porcine heart valve) or a cow valve (bovine heart valve). Generally blood thinners are not required with a tissue valve replacement; but tissue valves are not as durable as mechanical. Replacement of tissue valves is often required after 10-15 years.

Currently, the more common option is a mechanical valve replacement which is specially manufactured for its durability and lifetime lasting ability. Blood thinners are often required to prevent clotting in the mechanical valve.

In either valve replacement surgery, the patient's heart is temporarily stopped (the heart must not beat during the surgery) and he/she is put on a heart/lung machine which keeps blood flowing throughout the body while the faulty valve is removed surgically and replaced. The patient's own heart is restarted after successful valve placement.

**LIFE GOES ON. BE AN ORGAN/TISSUE DONOR.**