

National Donate Life campaign features woman who died waiting for kidney

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April 1, 2013 (CHICAGO) (WLS) -- Vikki Tulcus was a longtime advocate for organ donation-- and then her fight got personal.

"Before, my job depended on the organ donor program. Now, my life depends on it," Tulcus said in a 2012 TV spot for National Donate Life month. Tulcus, who worked side-by-side with Secretary of State Jesse White as the regional coordinator for the state's organ donation program, was diagnosed with a rare auto-immune disease that attacked her organs. She died in January while waiting for a new kidney.

Now, her story is part of the National Donate Life Month 2013 campaign.

Tulcus' fiance, Dan Lietz, wanted her memory to live on. So he took her place in Secretary White's office, leading the fight to educate people about organ donations.

"I want her to live on and it will be her legacy," Lietz said.

Much of Tulcus' organs weren't able to be transplanted due to her illness, but she was still able to help others in her death. Tulcus donated her corneas to two women, who can now see.

Tulcus was 43.

One organ donor can donate as many as 25 organ and tissue parts that can help the 117,000 people who are currently on the national transplant list.

To learn more about the state's donation program, visit lifegoeson.com

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