



# Life Goes On

Secretary of State Jesse White • Spring 2007  
A newsletter for Secretary of State facility employees and other organ/tissue donation advocates

As we celebrate the first anniversary of the new Organ/Tissue Donor Registry, I am pleased to report that 1.8 million people have made the decision to join the registry. By joining the new registry, family consent is no longer required for donation to occur. It is estimated that more than 100 additional lives will be saved each year with the new registry.

During implementation of the new registry, we have had tremendous support from all those on the front lines of donation at our facilities. I realize that any transition can be difficult but, once again, you have gone the extra mile to make it work. The ever-growing number of people saying "yes" to donation is proof that word is getting out about the importance of donation and joining the new registry.

Illinois continues to be a leader in donation. Our outreach efforts in communities across the state have helped spread the word about the critical need for donors and the lifesaving benefits of transplantation. You can be proud to be part of a great partnership where we all work together toward saving lives.

*Jesse White*

Jesse White  
Secretary of State

## Donate Life Month is in April

*"My hope is that one day every person on the waiting list will have the opportunity for a transplant. Those who wait are heroes in their own way. If we can bring donor awareness to more people in Illinois during the month of April, we can save more lives."*

— Secretary of State Jesse White

April is national Donate Life Month, and Organ/Tissue Donor Program staff, volunteers and donor advocates are busy planning donor awareness events and developing media campaigns aimed at increasing the donor pool.

The need for more donors in this state alone is critical. More than 4,600 people are waiting for lifesaving organs in Illinois, while 94,000 people wait for the gift of life on national waiting lists. For many of these people the wait may not bring a happy ending.

The Secretary of State's office will unveil a new donor awareness television and radio commercial during Donate Life Month, which will encourage people to join the new registry. Donor Program staff will man donor awareness booths at community events around the state, register thousands of people onsite, and distribute informa-

tional materials about the importance of donation and joining the registry. For more information on volunteering during Donate Life Month, please call 800-210-2106 or visit [www.LifeGoesOn.com](http://www.LifeGoesOn.com).



Secretary of State Jesse White greets Memorial Medical Center staff in Springfield at a recent Kidney Mobile donor awareness event at the hospital. The National Kidney Foundation's Kidney Mobile unit offers onsite kidney disease screening and referrals across the state.

### It's easy to join the new registry:

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

## Coworker Connection



Laura Bryson

Laura Bryson doesn't consider herself a hero. The Midlothian Driver Services facility employee says she did what she knew she had to do — donate one of her kidneys to a good friend.

"It's not such a scary thing," said Laura. "It's a positive thing. It makes you feel very good inside."

Laura has worked at the Midlothian facility for six years. She had never considered being a living donor until the opportunity presented itself. Her friend, Jennifer Gehr, was ill with kidney failure due to years as a diabetic. Laura played softball with Jennifer and learned in March of last year that Jennifer was probably going to miss the 2006 softball season because of failing kidneys and pancreas. Concerned that maybe no one in her family would be a potential donor, Laura was tested at the same time as Jennifer's brother.

"You don't go into this willy, nilly," said Laura. "But I really just felt in my heart this was what I was supposed to pursue."

In the meantime, Jennifer was undergoing peritoneal dialysis and declining in health. By early fall, Laura learned that she was a perfect match for her friend. Arrangements for the surgery began and on Oct. 19, 2006, both Laura and Jennifer were wheeled into the operating room for the transplant. They both did very well, Laura being released from the hospital one day after the surgery and Jennifer staying only two days. Laura returned to work at the facility six weeks later.

The most important thing to come out of the surgery for Laura was returning her friend to good health. Jennifer is generally healthy and is getting back to her life, although she is still waiting for a pancreas. She currently is undergoing islet cell injections for her pancreas, which may free her from insulin in the future.

Although Laura dismisses any suggestion of being a hero, we think she deserves accolades for her unselfish gift of life to her friend.

## "Share Your Life, Share Your Decision"

### Donor Program reaches out to teenagers

Thousands of Illinois high school students heard the donor message last semester through the Illinois Coalition on Donation's "Share Your Life, Share Your Decision, A High School Program on Organ and Tissue Donation."

Organ/Tissue Donor Program staff and volunteers through Gift of Hope and other donor agencies presented the 50-minute program to students in driver education and health classes across the state to promote awareness about donation, and to encourage them to discuss their wishes regarding donation with their parents. People under age 18 still require family consent for donation to occur.

The presentation includes a short student video featuring teens who have had experience with donation, a student workbook and a postcard the students send home to parents. Presenters also distribute green donor bracelets and other small giveaways, and facilitate lively student discussions about donation.

The program is one of the best ways to get young people involved in and thinking about donation, which may touch their lives in the future. Many health and driver education teachers across the state support the program. Without their support we could not reach as many students.

If you know of a health or driver education teacher who would be interested in the "Share Your Life, Share Your Decision" classroom presentation, please call the Organ/Tissue Donor Program at 217-558-1322, or the Kidney Foundation at 312-321-1500.



Secretary of State Jesse White met with (left to right) Willa Lang, director of the National Kidney Foundation of Illinois, and Sara Schumacher, Kevin England and Michael Leathers, all of Springfield's Memorial Medical Center, at the Kidney Mobile donor awareness day at the hospital.

# LIFE GOES ON. BE AN



Kidney and pancreas recipient Mike Elliott of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists visited a donor table staffed by Margaret Pearson at the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 241, conference and health fair at Pheasant Run Resort in St. Charles. The event increased awareness for donation for the hundreds of people who attended the health fair.

## I am. Are you?

Anyone interested in organ/tissue donation is encouraged to visit the interactive and informative MySpace page created by Donate Life Illinois (formerly the Illinois Coalition on Donation). Created to encourage people to read donor stories and sign up to be potential donors, the site at [www.IamAreYou.org](http://www.IamAreYou.org) offers a wealth of information about donation.

Designed to be a more personal donor site, it features donor statistics, stories and links to related information and the donor registry. The site has a user-friendly blog with hundreds of friends and donor advocates on the popular MySpace. Pictures, personal stories and donor advocate comments are just part of the site. Accompanied by the popular song, "Nothing Left To Lose," by Mat Kearney, people are encouraged to read the stories, leave their own comments and photos and, most importantly, get involved.

Donate Life Illinois is a part of the Donate Life America campaign, aimed at increasing the number of donors both in Illinois and nationwide. The goal of the program is to register 3.5 million people in Illinois' new donor registry over the next 18 months. There currently are 1.6 million people registered.

The site notes that while the vast majority of Illinois residents agree that donation is a positive choice (87%), a much smaller percentage of these people have actually joined the registry. Reasons for not joining include being too old or not thinking about it, as well as not knowing you had to re-register on the new donor registry, which was launched in January 2006.

**I M R U** — In addition to the new Web page on MySpace, several Illinois colleges and universities are in the process of launching donor outreach campaigns on their campuses. The campaigns, called "I M R U," will focus on getting college students, most of whom are over age 18, to join the new registry and tell their fellow students about donation. Look for more information this spring.

### Donate Life America in Rose Parade

The National Coalition on Donation, now called Donate Life America, had another wonderful entry in the New Year's Day Rose Parade in Pasadena, CA. Donor family members and others rode on the float, which was beautifully adorned with roses and the Donate Life logo. Traditionally, millions of people watch the parade on New Year's Day, a great way to remind people to think about donation in the new year.

## Q & A

**Q** I think I'd like to be an organ/tissue donor now — can I change my mind if I have already said no to the donor question at a Driver Services facility?

**A** Absolutely! Call 800-210-2106, visit [www.LifeGoesOn.com](http://www.LifeGoesOn.com), or complete the tear-off card in the donor registry brochure to join the registry. It's never too late to register as a donor!

**Q** Is signing the back of your Illinois driver's license still part of the donor program?

**A** Signing the back of your driver's license is no longer required. When visiting a Driver Services facility you will be asked if you would like to join the new registry. If you say yes, your name automatically goes into the registry and nothing further is required. If you are a donor, the word "donor" will appear in red to the right of your photo on the front of your license.

**For more information on organ/tissue donation, visit [www.LifeGoesOn.com](http://www.LifeGoesOn.com) or call 800-210-2106.**

# ORGAN/TISSUE DONOR.



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## FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

- ✓ Half of the 94,000 people on the national transplant waiting list are waiting for a life-saving kidney.
- ✓ 1.8 million people in Illinois have joined the new organ/tissue donor registry in its first year.
- ✓ "I am. Are you?" is a new Illinois campaign aimed at registering 3.5 million donors in the next 18 months. Visit [www.IamAreYou.org](http://www.IamAreYou.org) on MySpace for more information and awesome personal donor stories and comments.

Jesse White, Secretary of State  
Produced by the Secretary of State Communications Department.  
Printed by authority of the State of Illinois, February 2007 — 5M

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