

Life Goes On

Secretary of State Jesse White • Summer 2020
A newsletter for Secretary of State facility employees and other organ/tissue donation advocates

Our Driver Services facilities have recently reopened and allowed my office to move forward with our important mission of educating others about organ and tissue donation. I want to express my thanks to the many employees who kept our office operating during this difficult time. I also extend my sincerest condolences to the families who have lost loved ones to COVID-19.

Despite facilities closing for a time, the registry numbers have continued to increase through our online registration process. We have nearly 7 million registrants, and as we return to our new normal, I anticipate registration to continue to climb. The challenging circumstances have not slowed down our drive to promote the organ and tissue donor registry, and staff has made plans to distribute materials to facilities, partner with libraries and to launch new virtual campaigns.

I am very proud of our employees who have supported organ and tissue donation over the years. I know you will continue to do so even under these unprecedented circumstances.

Thank you for your continued support and hard work. Please stay safe.

Jesse White

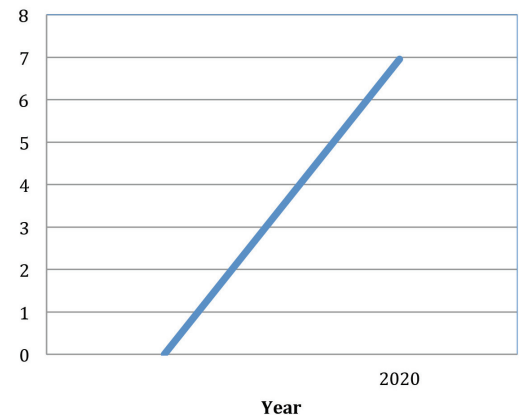
Jesse White
Secretary of State

Illinois donor registry to reach 7 million registrants

Number expected to be reached this year

The Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry is expected to reach the 7 million milestone in 2020. The registry now has 6.98 million registered individuals. As Driver Services facilities reopened this summer, customers were asked if they wished to join the registry to become a potential donor. Many 16- and 17-year-olds are signing up for the registry throughout the state. We applaud those teens who have made the first-time donor decision, a decision that has the potential to save countless lives down the road.

Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry



Lauren Gilbert joins the donor program

New program office manager in Springfield



Lauren Gilbert

Lauren Gilbert joined the donor program in December 2019 as program office manager. Lauren's duties include assisting the public, answering a variety of organ/tissue donor questions, registering individuals, coordinating and distributing supplies to staff, routing requests to staff, and participating in community outreach and educational events. Lauren also monitors the donor program's shared calendar and handles payroll.

Lauren, 30, and her husband, Blake, a driver for Springfield Pepsi, have an 18-month-old son, Rowen. Before joining the donor program in Springfield, Lauren worked in worker's compensation as a claims assistant.

"I am excited to be a part of such an important program," Lauren explained. She continues to learn more each day by talking to people and answering questions. Welcome aboard, Lauren!

Coordinator in the Spotlight

(NOTE: Once a year, we will feature a donor program coordinator in the Life Goes On newsletter. We will highlight the coordinator's history with the program, as well as contributions in advancing organ/tissue donor education and community awareness. This first installment features Elizabeth "Liz" Hager of Taylorville, a regional coordinator in central Illinois, who helped create the donor program in Illinois.)

Liz Hager recently celebrated her 35th anniversary with the Illinois Secretary of State's office. She began working for the office's staff attorney in February 1985, following 16 years at the Christian County state's attorney's office. In 1990, Liz was named manager of Program Development and Implementation in the Traffic Safety division. As part of a development project, Liz was instrumental in helping develop the Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor Registry, which was established on Oct. 1, 1992.

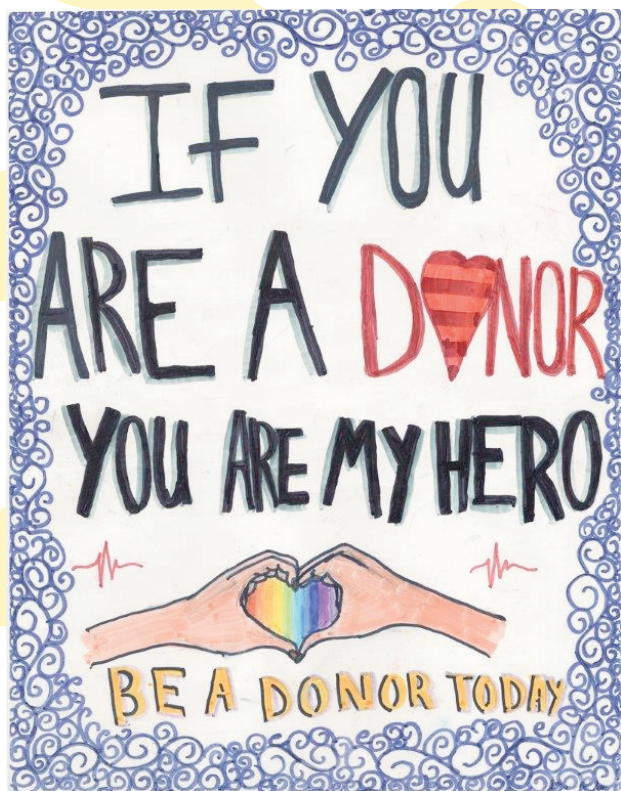
Noting that there was an empty spot at the top of the Illinois driver's license and state ID card (in the header that included height, weight, gender, etc.), Liz worked with information technology staff and others to designate the empty field with the symbol or word "donor." Customers' answers to the donor question were captured in the new field (with either a Y or N), and the state's donor registry was created. Illinois was the first state in the nation to have a useable organ/tissue donor registry that could benefit procurement agencies and facilitate data collection. The system was then able to track potential donors by age, geographical location and gender, making the Illinois registry a model for 21 other states' registries. The first query (or tally) of the database after just three months (Oct. 1-Dec. 31, 1992) indicated that 22 percent of licensed Illinois drivers and state ID card holders had joined the registry. Throughout the registry's 28-year history, nearly 7 million people have registered as donors.



Elizabeth Hager

Liz currently serves as a regional coordinator in central, eastern and western Illinois where she visits Driver Services facilities, conducts donor drives and participates in several Life Goes On committees that promote donation throughout her area. She regularly registers individuals as donors, speaks to community groups about the critical need for more donors in Illinois, and presents a classroom program to area high school driver's education students. A lifelong resident of Taylorville, Liz is active in her community.

Organ/tissue donor poster contest winners for 2020



2020 overall prize winning poster by Allie Parks.

Four Illinois students were awarded prizes in the Organ/Tissue Donor Program's 2020 Poster Contest. Hundreds of students from across the state submitted artwork earlier this year illustrating what donation meant to them. Prizes were awarded in four categories: kindergarten through second grade, third through fifth grade, sixth through eighth grade, and ninth through twelfth grade.

The 2020 overall prize winner was Allie Parks, a seventh-grade student at Adams School in Creal Springs. Her poster, with the words "If you are a donor, you are my hero" has been reprinted and distributed to all libraries, schools and Driver Services facilities in the state. She won in the sixth-through eighth-grade category.

Haley Young, a fifth-grade student at Alphonsus/St. Patrick School in Lemont, won in the third- through fifth-grade category. Ximenu Morales, a tenth-grade student at HSA McKinley Park in Chicago, received the prize for the ninth- through twelfth-grade category. Mirabella Burns, a second-grader from St. Andrews School in Murphysboro, won in the kindergarten through second-grade category.

Each student will receive an embossed Illinois Blue Book and a Barnes & Noble gift certificate. Unfortunately, the in-person awards ceremony with Secretary White was canceled this year due to the pandemic. Congratulations to all the 2020 winners. Look for Allie's poster throughout Illinois this year.

August is National Minority Donor Awareness Month

Everyone encouraged to promote donation within minority communities

The month of August is National Minority Donor Awareness Month (NMDAM). In an effort to increase the organ/tissue donor pool for everyone, minorities are encouraged to register as donors during this month. Originally observed for a week, minority donor awareness events now take place throughout the entire month of August.

In August, the donor program launched a virtual website campaign for NMDAM on its website www.LifeGoesOn.com. Included are materials such as a video message and letter from Secretary of State Jesse White, an informative PowerPoint, a flyer announcing the campaign, and information on the need for minorities to register as donors.

Data from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and its Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) shows that minorities sit in sizeable numbers on the organ transplant waiting list, yet they are less likely to be registered donors. Without donors of all ethnicities, many will not receive the transplants they desperately need.

National data from OPTN last year shows that 30 percent of the total candidates waiting for transplants are African Americans, but they comprised less than 13 percent of organ donors. In Illinois, African Americans outnumber whites on both the general waiting list (1,490 to 1,450) and the kidney waiting list (1,370 to 1,070). In addition, many underlying health factors affect African Americans in disproportionate numbers. Diseases and conditions, such as high blood pressure and diabetes, affect more African Americans than whites.

In the Latino community, large numbers tend to suffer from heart disease, obesity and diabetes, which often lead to the need for transplants. They also suffer from a chronic liver disease rate that is twice that of the white population. Language barriers also deter many from seeking critical health care. Twenty percent of candidates waiting for transplants are Hispanic, yet they comprised about 15 percent of donors last year. In Illinois, of the 833 Hispanics waiting for transplants, 690 are waiting for a kidney (82 percent) and 80 are waiting for a liver (10 percent).

Within the Asian American population where liver disease and hepatitis are prevalent, these conditions are known to put patients at risk for liver failure. In 2018, Asian Americans made up about 61 percent of the national population, yet they represented about 8 percent of the total candidates waiting for transplants. They comprised just over 3 percent of organ donors in 2019.

Please help us spread the word this summer that it is vitally important for every individual of every ethnicity to consider registering as a donor. With a more diverse organ pool, the chances for a successful transplant increase for everyone waiting.

Organ/Tissue Donor Program wins awards for 2019 commercial, newsletter

The Organ/Tissue Donor Program was awarded two AAMVA (Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators) PACE (Public Affairs and Consumer Education) awards for its 2019 April commercial featuring Sofia Sanchez and her heart transplant, and for its 2019 summer issue of the donor program's newsletter Life Goes On. AAMVA annually awards PACE awards for creativity in public awareness and education.

The 30-second television commercial featured then 10-year-old Sofia Sanchez, from Downers Grove, talking about receiving a heart transplant. Entertainer Drake surprised her with a visit in her hospital room at Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago shortly before the transplant. The summer 2019 Life Goes On newsletter featured the donor program's April 2019 events, many of which included Sofia and Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White at numerous public appearances and press conferences. The AAMVA awards ceremony will be held virtually this year by a series of videos at the end of the summer. The physical awards will be mailed to category winners later in the summer.

LIFE GOES ON
BE AN ORGAN/TISSUE DONOR

REGISTER AT
LIFEGOESON.COM



Secretary of State Jesse White, center, stands with attendees at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration at the Chicago Heights Public Library in Chicago Heights on Jan. 20.



Secretary White and David Sanders, president of Malcolm X College, at the Black Men's Wellness Conference at Malcolm X College on Feb. 6.



Lebanon High School Athletic Director Chad Cruthis stands with his son, Jackson, who received a kidney from his dad in 2019. They are wearing kidney donation t-shirts to promote donor awareness at the school's Feb. 18 basketball game.

Sycamore donor mom volunteers at schools



John A. Beach

For Joy Beach, of Sycamore, it was a phone call a mother never wants to receive, telling her that her son had been involved in a serious motorcycle accident the night after his 22nd birthday. Tragically, her son, John Beach, was not able to recover from his injuries. Although John's family was unaware he had registered as a donor, John was able to save six people's lives through organ donation and improve the lives of 160 others through tissue donation in 2014. Joy has met several of her son's recipients, who are all grateful for their gifts.

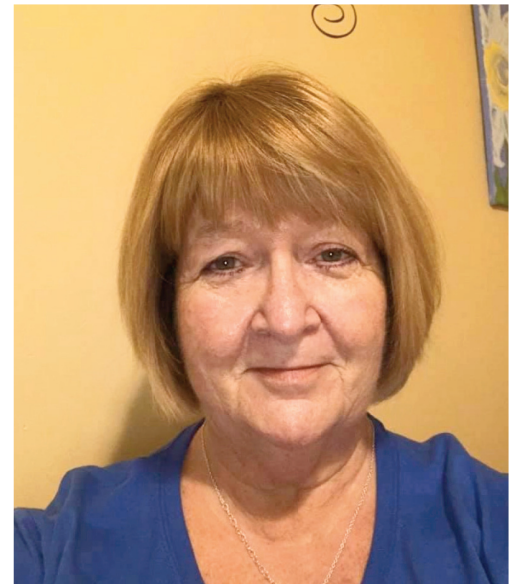
Joy now volunteers to speak about the importance of organ/tissue donation at high school driver's education classrooms with staff from the Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor Program. One of the high schools she presents to is Burlington Central High School in Plato Center – the high school her son attended. She tells students about her son's heroism and encourages students to register when they turn 16 so they might have the chance to donate one day.

Joy's family created the John A. Beach Memorial Foundation as a way to honor his life. The foundation's mission is promoting donor education and awareness. "I consider him a hero," Joy said.

Amid pandemic, Taylorville resident receives dual transplant

Despite uncertainty, Tracy Clarke Mahan never gave up hope

Tracy Clarke Mahan, a court reporter from Taylorville, began feeling ill with nausea and pain in October 2019. When the diagnosis came back as cirrhosis of the liver (the cause is still unknown), Tracy was informed that she needed both a liver and a kidney transplant because her single functioning kidney was not strong enough to withstand the anti-rejection medicine she would need to keep a liver transplant healthy. After spending the month of December 2019 in the hospital, she was placed on the transplant waiting list in January 2020. To add to her tense situation, Tracy needed both organs to come from the same donor.



Tracy Clarke Mahan

She finally received the call on May 3, after waiting 5 months, that she was going to receive both transplants at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis. Tracy, who had spent many weeks in the hospital desperately in need, was elated to be receiving her second chance at life. She had become so sick that she was afraid that she would not make it through another day.

After her May surgery, she was discharged, finally returning to her Taylorville home on May 28. Her three adult children were very grateful when she finally received her transplants;

however, the high threat of COVID-19 meant they could not accompany her to the hospital. She was reunited with her children on Mother's Day, May 10.

"I weep for my precious donor and their family," Tracy said. "I am so grateful for this second chance at life." Calling her transplants a miracle, Tracy wants to encourage everyone to sign up as donors so that life goes on for others on the waiting list.

2020 Donor Program Staff List

Program Director (Chicago)

Connie Boatman
wboatman@ilsos.gov

Program Office Manager (Springfield)

Lauren Gilbert
lgilbert@ilsos.gov

Regional Coordinators

Damarius Blanks
(St. Louis metro, southern Illinois)
dblanks@ilsos.gov

Gavin Dillon (Chicago, north suburban)
gdillon@ilsos.gov

Jan Eschen (northern Illinois)
jeschen@ilsos.gov

Elizabeth Hager (central Illinois)
lhager@ilsos.gov

Karen Kohnke (north central Illinois)
kkohnke@ilsos.gov

Dan Lietz (Chicago)
dlietz@ilsos.gov

Angelique Marseille
(Chicago, south suburban)
amarseille@ilsos.gov

Margaret Pearson (suburban Chicago)
mpearson@ilsos.gov



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