



Life Goes On

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

The Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Program observed National Donor Sabbath the weekend of Nov. 15-17. This serves as a time when faith leaders are encouraged to speak to their congregations about the importance of registering as organ and tissue donors. A press conference was held on Nov. 15 at the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago with many religious leaders joining to support and encourage individuals to register as donors.

The number of 16- and 17-year-olds who have joined the donor registry in Illinois has climbed to almost 92,000. Many teens are being educated about organ and tissue donation in their high school driver's education classes. Donor staff members participate in classroom presentations to thousands of driver's education students during the school year.

As we begin the New Year, I want to thank my driver services facility staff members who diligently ask the donor question to hundreds of customers every day. You are making a difference as we strive to educate customers about the importance of organ and tissue donation.

Jesse White

Jesse White
Secretary of State

Faith leaders join in the National Donor Sabbath conversation

Acceptance of donation across faith spectrum

Faith leaders, living donors, transplant recipients, donor family members and advocates came together on Nov. 15 at the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago to promote organ and tissue donation. Banding together to show support of organ and tissue donation during the weekend of National Donor Sabbath, clergy and faith leaders talked about their faiths' acceptance of helping others through transplantation. Faith leaders agree that donation is the most wonderful gift one human can give to another — the gift of life.

Rev. David Potete, of Northwest Community Church in Chicago, is a living kidney donor to one of his parishioners, a young mother named Kelly Roberts. Pastor Potete and Kelly were featured in the Secretary of State's National Donor Sabbath PSA last year. They shared their experience in a short message that was distributed to dozens of religious radio stations across the

state in advance of National Donor Sabbath.

"One of the core values of our church is serving others," said Rev. Potete. "I can't tell you how good it felt to help a friend."

"His selfless act was a real miracle to me, and I am so thankful for a second chance at life," Roberts added.

The message given by all faith leaders at the press conference was that organ/tissue donation is inclusive and is considered a charitable act. As was mentioned by one faith leader in attendance, human beings have "interchangeable parts" which, when donated as lifesaving gifts, restore life to those who are critically ill.

Several members of the Vega donor family also attended the press conference. Jesse Vega, Jr., 28, died in a motorcycle accident in August 2019, saving four lives through organ donation. The Chicago-area family talked about

(cont. on pg. 2)



Clergy, donor advocates, recipients and donor family members gather for a press conference Nov. 15 at the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago in observance of National Donor Sabbath.

the gifts Jesse gave complete strangers. They also encouraged people to sign up as donors as they have all done in the months since Jesse's death.

Other religious leaders who spoke at the press conference included Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, III, Trinity United Church of Christ, Chicago; Shiva Singh Khalsa, representing the Sikh tradition; and Rev. Anthony McPherson, Mid-America Transplant Services. Tracey Alston with the First Ladies Health Initiative and Jack Lynch from the Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network were also featured speakers. In attendance were First Lady Monica Moss of Trinity United Church of Christ and the First Ladies Health Initiative; Kevin Lee from Mid-America Transplant Services; Dr. Rasha Ali; and Jacqueline Burgess-Bishop, CEO of National Kidney Foundation of Illinois.



The family of donor Jesse Vega, who saved four lives through organ donation, paid tribute to him at a press conference for National Donor Sabbath on Nov. 15 in Chicago.

Kidney donor from Atlanta attends Decatur donor sabbath ceremony

Patrick Dudra's donation saved a police officer's life

HSHS St. Mary's Hospital in Decatur observed National Donor Sabbath on Nov. 14 with faith leaders and donor advocates celebrating the lifesaving benefits of organ and tissue donation. As part of a national conversation among faith leaders, St. Mary's staff and dozens of donor advocates presented a program that included speakers, some of whom were transplant recipients. Candles were lit for recipients, donor families, those waiting for transplants, and health care staff.

Michael Hicks, president and CEO of HSHS St. Mary's, welcomed the audience and spoke of St. Mary's dedication to organ and tissue donation. Personnel from Decatur Memorial Hospital also attended the event.

The event had a special guest in attendance who traveled from Atlanta to be part of the ceremony. Kidney donor Patrick Dudra lives out of state and is a living donor to a police officer. Dudra's mother, Susan Dudra, is a member of the Macon County Life Goes On Committee. Dudra, formerly of Moosehart, IL, decided to become a kidney donor after watching a documentary about organ and tissue donation and the need for donors. Despite many obstacles, Dudra found Charles Flood, a police officer with the DeKalb County Georgia Police Department and a father of three, who needed a kidney.

Dudra was tested and then informed that he was a perfect match for Flood. In chatting, Flood and Dudra realized they had both been associated with Mooseheart Child City, a Chicago-area residence for at-risk youth, years before they met — Dudra as a supervisory house parent and Flood as a youth resident. The successful kidney transplant was performed on March 10, 2017. Flood said his life has dramatically improved since the transplant. "I am able to function as a normal person, didn't have to face dialysis and have even been able to complete a marathon," he said. "I am so grateful for Patrick. He has been such a blessing."



Charles Flood (L) and Patrick Dudra (R).



Dozens of people attended a ceremony for National Donor Sabbath at HSHS St. Mary's Hospital.

Jesse White promotes National Teen Driver Safety Week at safety fair

Reminds public that 16- and 17-year-olds can register as part of the Organ/Tissue Donor Program

During National Teen Driver Safety Week, Secretary White announced that teen driver deaths are down 69 percent since 2007. White joined the Illinois Partners for Traffic Safety at the House of Hope in Chicago to remind teens to drive safely. More than 500 Chicago-area high school students attended the safety fair which included rollover and driving simulators, a golf cart driving range, motorcycle awareness presentations and a performance by the Jesse White Tumbling Team.

According to the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), since White's efforts to overhaul the state's graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws took effect in 2008, teen driving fatalities have dropped more than 60 percent. Many cite White's nationally heralded GDL program for the dramatic decrease in fatalities.

Secretary White also reminded those in attendance at the safety fair to please consider becoming part of the state's Organ/Tissue Donor Program. The number of 16- and 17-year-olds participating in the program continues to rise each month, and nearly 92,000 teens have made the donor decision. A registration table for the Organ/Tissue Donor Program was available for students and the general public at the fair.



ABOVE: Secretary White joined the Illinois Partners for Traffic Safety at the House of Hope in Chicago during National Teen Driver Safety Week. Secretary White is pictured with members of the Illinois State Police, State Farm and area high school driver's education teachers. BELOW: Secretary White is pictured with members of the Jesse White Tumbling Team who performed for nearly 500 teens from Chicago-area high schools.



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The Springfield Life Goes On Committee decorated a holiday tree during Springfield Memorial Hospital's annual Festival of Trees event Nov. 16. Area businesses bid on the decorated trees with the proceeds benefitting Memorial Hospital's foundation. This year's theme was Jingle Bells and Sea Shells.



Mary Kay and husband Nick Godly stopped by the Life Goes On table at the Apple and Pork Festival in Clinton Sept. 29. Mary Kay received a kidney from her brother in 2004.



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Employee Connection

Secretary of State hearing officer's wife receives kidney



Ira Maimon with wife, Barbra

For Ira Maimon, a formal hearings employee in Joliet, his wife's kidney transplant remains a pivotal moment in his family's life. In July 2015, Barbra Maimon of Naperville, received the gift of a lifetime — a kidney from her cousin, Gina Regnier, also of Naperville.

Barbra, mother of three daughters, began experiencing extreme fatigue as a result of kidney failure (due to undiagnosed endometriosis) more than a year before her transplant. She underwent surgery to help correct the endometriosis, but her kidneys were becoming less and less effective. She was placed on the transplant list for a kidney in 2013. Luckily for Barbra, she had two family members offer to be her living kidney donor. While Barbra waited on the transplant waiting list, her cousin, Gina, was tested to see if she was a match, a process that took several months. Barbra's doctors were preparing her for kidney dialysis when news came that Gina was a good match, sparing Barbra from dialysis. The successful transplant surgery took place in July 2014 at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. Gina was released the day following surgery. Both women are doing well nearly six years later.

"My cousin gave me the greatest gift of all, to be able to live my life and raise my children," Barbra said. "I can't think of anything more beautiful than one human being can do for another. In fact, my cousin told me that besides having her children, it was the proudest moment of her life."

World's major religions accept/encourage organ and tissue donation — consider it a charitable act

During National Donor Sabbath, religious leaders join in the conversation about the life-saving benefits of organ donation and the life-enhancing gifts of tissue donation. According to the Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network and the United Network of Organ Sharing, most of the world's major religions accept and encourage donation to help save the lives of those in need. Many consider it a final, charitable act of giving from one human being to another.

The **Roman Catholic Church** views donation as an act of "charity and love" according to many sources associated with religious views on donation. Pope St. John Paul II accepted donation, viewing it as an act of generosity to save lives. **Judaism** views donation as preserving human life, an important principle of Jewish faith and law. The preservation of human life is key in Judaism. **Muslims** also view donation as a selfless act of kindness to others and, in some circumstances, an obligation to save lives through donation. The **Hindu, Lutheran, Baha'i** and **Mormon** faiths all agree that donation is one of individual choice that followers are encouraged to discuss with family.

Buddhist faith leaders agree that donation is a personal decision, but encourage acts of kindness and compassion. **Sikh** leaders state that donation can be considered a person's last act of generosity. **Jehovah's Witnesses**



Dr. Deepak Mital, a kidney transplant surgeon at Christ Hospital in Oak Lawn, center, stands at a donor registration table with his wife, Anita, left, and Shoba Nandham at a Diwali celebration at the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago in Lemont Oct. 27.

may become organ donors if they wish. **Protestantism** allows individuals to follow their conscience when making the donor decision. For **Christian Scientists**, spiritual healing normally comes first, but nothing would prevent them from choosing to receive a transplant or becoming a donor. **Christianity** widely accepts donation as a charitable act. Many other religions leave the donor decision up to the individual, not preventing a person's choice to donate.

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