



JOSE SALVADOR SOTO GIVES THE GIFT OF LIFE TO FOUR PEOPLE

This past week, Chicago celebrated Día del Niño, when families usually present gifts to their children. However, there is one case where the opposite occurred. Jose Salvador Soto, a child who only lived for three years, gave a permanent gift to four others – the gift of life – by donating his organs.

Jose choked while eating. When he arrived at the emergency room at St. Alexius Medical Center, he had already suffered severe brain damage and there was nothing the doctors could do; they declared him brain dead. However, Jose continues to live through the four people who received his organs: a two-year-old girl received his heart, a 10-year-old boy has his liver, his lungs are helping a seven-year-old child breathe easier and a 29-year-old woman has a better life thanks to his kidneys.

The young boy's donation inspired hospital employees to donate their time and teach first-aid techniques that could help prevent these types of tragedies from occurring in the future. However, this story could have ended differently, with just the sad death of a child, says Raiza Mendoza, Hispanic Outreach Coordinator for Gift of Hope, the non-profit organization that coordinates organ and tissues donations in Illinois and northwest Indiana.

"At first, the family was not sure if they would donate Jose's organs; they didn't know about donation. It wasn't until the next day that the chaplain, Father Domingo Hurtado, sat down with Jose's mother and asked her to reconsider. He explained that the child's organs, which he could no longer use, could help other patients on the waiting list," explains Mendoza.

Angelica Soto, Jose's mother, prayed and then told the Father, "Jesus gave his life to save others, and maybe He sent Jose to this world to save others as well."

Mendoza confirms, "Although it was a difficult decision, the family felt that donating their son's organs was the right thing to do. This way, they were saving lives and preventing other families from experiencing the pain of losing a loved one."

This year on Día del Niño, Mendoza encourages families to celebrate their children, especially those like Jose Salvador Soto. "It is sad to lose our loved ones, especially when they're so young, but when the situation is irreversible, organ donation is one way to help alleviate the pain a little."

She adds, "I hope that more people consider organ donation, since it really adds a positive note to an otherwise senseless tragedy. Jose Salvador Soto, thanks to the courage and generosity of his parents, made a difference and an invaluable impact on the lives of everyone who received his gift of life."

The national waiting list for organs and tissues exceeds 107,000 people and continues to grow. More than 17,000 of those on the list are Hispanic. To register as an organ donor, visit www.giftofhope.org or www.donatelifellinois.net. Interested donors can also call (630) 758-2744 for more information or to register.

"Although he was so small, whenever Jose saw something sad on TV, he would also get sad and wanted to help," said his mother. "Now, we're not the only ones who remember our son; the families of those he helped remember him too."

About Gift of Hope

A federally designated non-profit organization, Gift of Hope coordinates the process of organ and tissue donation, provides professional education, and supports donor families in Illinois and northwest Indiana.

Let your friends know 