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### **DAY CALLS ATTENTION TO NEED FOR MINORITY DONATION**

Latino and African-American task force leaders with the Regional Organ Bank of Illinois (ROBI) have issued a call to action among Illinois' minority communities for the fifth annual National Minority Donor Awareness Day on Aug. 1.

"On Aug. 1, we implore our community leaders and families to get the facts and make the decision to donate," says Sheila George, President of the ROBI African-American Task Force. George also serves as program director for the Chicago/Northwest Indiana chapter of the National Minority Organ and Tissue Transplant Education Program (MOTTEP).

Minorities make up more than half of the 77,000 people waiting for lifesaving organ transplants in this country. Yet, minorities make up only one-third of all organ donations.

That's a grave public health issue since successful transplants for minority recipients usually require organs from minority donors, George says.

John Valencia, ROBI Latino Affairs Coordinator, adds that communities should not confine themselves to a one-day discussion about donation. "We urge everyone to plan year-round ways to educate others in their neighborhoods, churches, schools and workplaces about how lifesaving organ donation can turn around this critical public health crisis," he says.

ROBI can provide speakers and materials for individuals, families, churches, schools and other groups who want to participate in National Minority Donation Awareness Day by:

- Having a family discussion about organ donation.
- Writing a letter to the editor or article for local newspapers or organization newsletters.
- Organizing a health fair including information and organ donation and disease prevention.
- Inviting a donor family member, transplant speaker or other speaker on donation to your church or community meeting.

*(more)*

The U.S. Congressional Task Force on Organ and Tissue Donation officially endorsed the Aug. 1 designation for National Minority Donor Awareness Day in 1996. For more information on minority donation and awareness projects, contact ROBI at 312/431-3600 or visit the volunteers section of [www.robi.org](http://www.robi.org). An online Spanish version is available. Information also is offered at [www.nationalmottep.org](http://www.nationalmottep.org).

ROBI is the not-for-profit, federally designated organ procurement organization serving the northern three-fourths of Illinois and northwest Indiana. One of the nation's busiest OPOs, ROBI is responsible for recovering and distributing organs and tissues for transplantation in accordance with strict federal guidelines. ROBI worked with a record 287 donor families in 2000 to recover 859 organs for transplant. In addition, ROBI provides education about organ and tissue donation for healthcare professionals and the general public.

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