

Contact:
Kim McCullough, Regional Organ Bank of Illinois
kmccullo@robi.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
February 12, 2002

2001 SHOWED DIP IN ORGAN DONATION IN ILLINOIS, NORTHWEST INDIANA

ELMHURST, ILL. – In Illinois and northwest Indiana, 250 donors made possible 792 lifesaving organ transplants in 2001, the Regional Organ Bank of Illinois has announced. Additionally, 588 families consented to tissue donation, enabling thousands of patients to receive medical transplants of heart valves, bone, corneas and other tissue.

“We honor and continue to thank those donor families we worked with last year, whose decisions helped save and improve the lives of so many men, women and children,” said ROBI President/CEO Jerry Anderson. “We celebrate with the families and friends of those whose lives were saved.”

However, ROBI reports that organ donation in Illinois and northwest Indiana decreased slightly in 2001 from record rates the previous two years. In 2000, 287 donors made possible 859 lifesaving transplants; in 1999, ROBI worked with the families of 276 donors who made possible 857 transplants.

Anderson attributed the number of transplants made possible to the commitment of donor families, ROBI staff, and staff at the eight transplant centers and 178 other hospitals in ROBI’s service area. However, he said, a primary challenge to increasing donation is a declining number of potential donors.

Patients who suffer traumatic brain injuries are those most likely to become potential donors once all lifesaving measures are exhausted and death is imminent. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the two major causes of head trauma – motor vehicle accidents and firearm-related violence – have decreased dramatically over the last few years.

The number of Americans added to the national transplant waiting list continues to dramatically outpace the number of donors. The list has grown from 73,812 in January 2001 to nearly 80,000 today. In Illinois, the number has grown from 4,315 to more than 4,600.

“We are all too aware that time ran out for more than 300 patients in our service area last year,” Anderson said. “These men, women and children died while waiting for lifesaving organs that never became available.”

(more)

Public and professional education remain critical to increasing donation awareness and saving more lives, Anderson said.

In 2001, ROBI provided more than 300 donation awareness programs through communities, businesses and schools. ROBI worked closely with other donation-related organizations including the National Kidney Foundation of Illinois and Secretary of State Jesse White to increase awareness through additional events, programs and public campaigns.

Building on its strong partnerships with hospitals, ROBI also provided more than 200 professional education programs to physicians, nurses and allied healthcare staff about their roles in the lifesaving donation process.

Organs and tissues from a single donor can help more than 25 individuals. Everyone, no matter how young or old, can be a lifesaver by choosing to be an organ and tissue donor. To become a donor, sign a Uniform Donor Card (such as the card on the back of a driver's license) and, most importantly, inform family members of the decision. In Illinois, as in most states, a family's consent is required before donation can occur.

ROBI is the not-for-profit, federally designated organ procurement organization serving the northern three-fourths of Illinois and northwest Indiana. ROBI is responsible for recovering and distributing organs and tissues for transplantation in accordance with strict federal guidelines.

In addition, ROBI provides education about organ and tissue donation for healthcare professionals and the general public. ROBI's main office is in Elmhurst with satellite offices in Bloomington, Champaign, Peoria, Rockford and Springfield.

For a free reference kit about donation or to schedule a public or professional education program, call ROBI at 888/307-DON8 or e-mail info@robi.org.

###