

Contact: John Valencia, Hispanic Affairs  
630/758-2744 or [jvalencia@giftofhope.org](mailto:jvalencia@giftofhope.org)

630/758-2600  
[www.giftofhope.org](http://www.giftofhope.org)

## **Chicago Fire, Hispanic leaders launch campaigns for organ & tissue donation awareness**

ELMHURST, Ill. (September 13, 2002) – The Chicago Fire soccer team has kicked off a billboard and public awareness campaign with Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network targeting the need for lifesaving organ and tissue donation among Hispanics.

With Hispanic medic and community leaders, Chicago Fire player and campaign spokesman Carlos Bocanegra unveiled this week the outdoor poster that will be seen on more than 30 billboards throughout the Chicago area over the next four weeks.

Hispanics are the fastest-growing population segment – and the number of Hispanic patients waiting for lifesaving organ transplants continues to outpace the number of Hispanic donors. Hispanics make up more than 13 percent of the patients on the national organ transplant list and account for 11 percent of all organ donors.

“We are very excited about the campaign and are confident that it will help increase awareness and ultimately save lives,” said Gift of Hope Hispanic Affairs Coordinator John Valencia. “We commend the Chicago Fire and Carlos Bocanegra for their support and work addressing this critical health issue.”

Gift of Hope also has teamed with Rossi Enterprises of Chicago to promote donation awareness at “Dias de los Hispanos” at Disney on Ice at the Allstate Arena on Sept. 29 and at the Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus at the United Center on Nov. 24

Overall, the national waiting list has climbed to more than 80,000 – including more than 4,700 in Illinois. About 100 patients each day are added to the list, while an average of 17 people die waiting for donated organs that never become available.

Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network is the federally mandated not-for-profit organ procurement organization (OPO) that works with hospitals and families in Illinois and northwest Indiana to coordinate organ and tissue donation. Among the nation’s largest OPOs, it worked with the families of 250 donors to make possible 792 lifesaving organ transplants in 2001. Additionally, 588 families consented to tissue donation, enabling thousands of patients to receive medical transplants of heart valves, bone and other tissue.

Everyone is urged to get the facts on donation, make the decision to become a donor and discuss the decision with family members. Organizations and employers are urged to provide donation awareness programs for employees, customers and community members. Call the Gift of Hope Education Hotline at 888/307-DON8 or visit [www.giftofhope.org](http://www.giftofhope.org).

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