

Contact: Kim McCullough, Public Relations
kmccullough@giftofhope.org

630/758-2600
www.giftofhope.org

NEED FOR MINORITY ORGAN/TISSUE DONATION EMPHASIZED

ELMHURST, Ill. (July 15, 2002) – Hispanic and African-American leaders with Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network have issued a call to action among Illinois’ minority communities for the sixth annual National Minority Donor Awareness Day on Aug. 1.

“We implore our community leaders and families to get the facts and make the decision to donate,” says Jack Lynch, Gift of Hope Community Affairs Director. Lynch, along with LouEster Petty, President of the Gift of Hope African-American Task Force (AATF), oversees community outreach on organ and tissue donation through AATF chapters in Chicago, the north and south suburbs, northwest Indiana and Rockford.

Minorities make up about one-third of all organ donations in this country, yet comprise more than half of the 80,000 people waiting for lifesaving organ transplants.

African Americans:

- Make up 18 percent of all those in this country who receive transplants.
- Account for 13 percent of all organ donors.
- Experience kidney failure more often than any other race.
- Make up 35% of those awaiting kidney transplants.

Nearly 70 percent of the organs transplanted into African-Americans come from Caucasian donors; yet, African-American transplant recipients are at less risk for organ rejection when the donor organ is from another African-American.

Hispanics:

- Make up more than 13 percent of the patients on the national organ transplant list.
- Account for 11 percent of all organ donors.
- Are the fastest-growing segment of the population; thus, the number of Hispanics on the waiting list is expected to continue to outpace the number of Hispanic donors.

John Valencia, Gift of Hope Hispanic Affairs Coordinator, says communities should not confine themselves to a one-day discussion about donation. “We urge everyone to join us in year-round efforts 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.

In 1996, the U.S. Congressional Task Force on Organ and Tissue Donation designated Aug. 1 as National Minority Donor Awareness Day. For more information on minority donation and awareness projects, contact Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network at 888/307-DON8 or visit www.giftofhope.org. Spanish speakers can call 877/577-3747 or visit the website’s Spanish-language section.

(MORE)

With more than 100 members, Gift of Hope's all-volunteer African-American Task Force focuses on education in the African-American community by participating in Chicago's Unity Fair, Today's Black Woman Expo, health fairs and other events throughout the Chicago metropolitan area and other communities. It coordinates an average 30 outreach talks and programs each month.

In the Hispanic community, Gift of Hope's Hispanic Task Force coordinates outreach and training programs with Spanish media, healthcare, community, educational, religious, civic and social organizations to increase awareness and acceptance of organ and tissue donation and transplantation in the Hispanic community.

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, corneas and other tissue.

###