

Contact:
Kim McCullough, Regional Organ Bank of Illinois
kmccullo@robi.org or 630/758-2736

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 12, 2002

CELEBRITY EVENT, CEREMONIES, GREEN RIBBON CAMPAIGNS HIGHLIGHT ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION AWARENESS IN APRIL

ELMHURST, ILL. – The Illinois Coalition on Donation and hundreds of volunteers and healthcare professionals throughout Illinois and northwest Indiana join those across the country in commemorating National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week, April 21-27.

Donor Week is observed each April to honor the generosity of organ and tissue donors whose gifts give others a second chance at living. “It’s a time to focus public attention on the critical organ shortage that keeps more than 4,600 men, women and children in our region waiting and hoping for transplants that will save their lives,” says Hilary Cichosz, donation awareness associate for the National Kidney Foundation of Illinois and secretary for the Illinois Coalition on Donation.

During April, hundreds of donor awareness programs are taking place. Among the highlights:

Chicago area

- A “Celebrity Basketball Challenge” for donor awareness will pit the U.S. Transplant Games' Illinois team "Spare Parts" against a celebrity team including Mark Suppelsa of NBC-5 News, Larry Potash and Mike Barz of the WGN Morning Show, Eric Ferguson from 101.9 The Mix, former Chicago Bull Craig Hodges and Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White. The free event is 6-8 p.m. Wednesday, April 24, at the Windy City Field House, 2367 W. Logan Blvd.
- Connie Payton and Acting U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Kenneth Moritsugu will join U.S. Health and Human Services and Illinois donation officials at a news conference 11:30 a.m. April 25, 233 N. Michigan Ave., south lobby.

(MORE)

- Beginning April 15, Chicago-area theaters will run a commercial developed by the Illinois Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor Program, featuring liver transplant recipient and Olympic snowboarding medallist Chris Klug. The commercial will be unveiled at an April 15 news conference in Chicago.
- A two-month campaign on CTA rail and bus lines will featuring donor families and transplant recipients encouraging riders to "Donate Life"/"Done Vida."
- The National Kidney Foundation of Illinois' National Donor Family Quilt will be displayed all week at the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago, along with a massive green ribbon on the building exterior. The green ribbon is the universal symbol for support of organ and tissue donation.
- Organ Transplant Support, a Naperville-based organization for donor families and transplant recipients, will host its annual Tree Planting Ceremony and Dedication 1:30 p.m. Sunday, April 28, at Naper Settlement in Naperville. More than several hundred donor family members and transplant recipients from throughout the state attend. Speakers include Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White and Naperville Mayor George Pradel.
- The Regional Organ Bank of Illinois' African-American Task Force hosts its annual Candlelight Bowl, 9 p.m.-midnight May 4, at Lakewood Bowl in Richton Park.

Central Illinois

- An awareness campaign and donor card signings take place at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, April 15-19, organized by Psi Upsilon fraternity in memory of a brother who became a donor last year. Additionally, the Student Nurses' Association has organized the Lisa Corsini Memorial 5K Run/Walk beginning 7 a.m. April 27 at Urbana's Crystal Lake Park. The walk and ceremony will promote awareness in memory of Corsini, an exchange student from Italy who gave life through organ donation.
- A "Day of Hope and Remembrance" and donor tree ceremony, hosted by the Peoria Area Transplant Society, will be 2-4 p.m. April 21, at the Gateway Building on the riverfront.
- Springfield Mass Transit has donated interior advertising space on all its buses for donor awareness messages beginning in April. Laidlaw School Busing also donated advertising space on Springfield-area public school buses and is distributing paycheck inserts with donation information to its 400 employees.
- Hardees' restaurants in the Springfield area will distribute tray liners with a "gift of hope quiz" about donation.

'Life Goes On'

The Illinois Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Program also has coordinated events at its 2002 "Life Goes On" cities of Chicago, Bloomington/Normal, Springfield, Rockford, Quincy, Decatur, Carbondale and East St. Louis. The "Life Goes On" program supports Illinois communities in promoting donor awareness and participation the

(MORE)

state’s organ/tissue donor registry, which documents an individual’s wishes regarding donation. April events include:

- In McLean County, Secretary of State Jesse White will recognize winners of a high school essay and poem contest at a reception at noon April 25, at Illinois Wesleyan University Memorial Student Center. Bloomington/Normal businesses are displaying marquee messages about donation, and look for the “Life Goes On” banner over Center Street in Bloomington during Donor Week.
- A press conference and recognition ceremony 9:30 a.m. April 26 at Memorial Medical Center, Springfield. Volunteers and community leaders also are supporting green ribbon and donor awareness campaigns in area schools, businesses and government offices.
- A series of Rockford programs including a green ribbon campaign, a Rockford City Council ceremony, a mall display and an event with the Tebala Shrine Circus at 12:30 p.m. April 27.

Other campaigns

- 7-Eleven Wiliana Franchise Owners Association, representing owners of more than 200 7-Eleven stores in the Illinois and northwest Indiana region, has underwritten and agreed to display posters and counter brochures about donation at its stores in April. For the second consecutive year, 7-Eleven also will collect donations at counter canisters to raise funding for public education program about organ and tissue donation through the Regional Organ Bank of Illinois.
- The Chicago Fire Department and the Chicago Police Department will provide posters, donor cards and donation information to firefighters and officers during National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week.
- Numerous hospitals and health care facilities have coordinated displays, press conferences, employee programs and events educating visitors about donation and transplantation.

The need for donation is critical: Every 13 minutes, a new name is added to the national transplant waiting list. Each day, an average of 16 people die while waiting for organs that never become available.

“We urge people to take this opportunity to decide to be a hero by becoming an organ and tissue donor,” Cichosz says. “Take the time to sign a donor card, such as the one on the back of a driver’s license. Most importantly, tell your family so that your wishes will be carried out.” In Illinois, as in most states, a family’s consent is required before donation can occur.

For more information on Donor Week events or materials, and support for events in your community, call the Illinois Coalition on Donation at 888/307-DON8.

###