

# NEWS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **ADVOCATES HONORED FOR OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERISM EFFORTS**

ELMHURST, ILL. (AUGUST 5, 2003) – In Illinois, more than 4,400 people are waiting for lifesaving organ transplants. In 2002, 330 people in Illinois died while waiting for transplants. Four Illinoisans have been honored for their volunteerism to encourage people to pay attention to these facts and do something about it.

Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network recognized four Illinoisans with its third annual “Echo of Life” awards Aug. 2 in Chicago. These volunteers were awarded for their outstanding achievement in initiating and developing programs in their communities that urge people to decide to become organ and tissue donors and tell their families about that decision.

Those honored were:

- Mary Jones of Peoria;
- Bob Roen of Lake Forest;
- Apostle Michael Gougis-Flowers of Flossmoor, for her work on behalf of the Gift of Hope African-American Task Force; and
- Maria Garcia of Chicago, for her efforts with the Gift of Hope Hispanic Task Force.

“We recognize our Echo of Life award winners as those who set outstanding leadership examples in their communities by developing programs, supporting other volunteers and families, and leading the way in speaking out for the critical need for organ and tissue donation,” said Gift of Hope President/CEO Jerry Anderson.

The four, along with more than 700 other Gift of Hope volunteers, have helped to significantly increase the number of donation education programs taking place in Illinois and northwest Indiana schools, businesses and communities. These education programs, in turn, help to educate the public about organ and tissue donation and increase donation rates.

Gift of Hope reports 2003 donation rates are on track toward exceeding those of 2002, which recorded a 17 percent increase in organs transplanted and the most donations and transplants ever in a single year in Illinois and northwest Indiana.

A heart transplant recipient, Jones is a team leader for Gift of Hope’s Peoria volunteer group, which is among Gift of Hope’s most active. Among the many programs she’s helped coordinate in 2003 was a successful essay contest in Peoria-area schools during National Donate Life Month in April. Jones also has organized a transplant support group through OSF Saint Francis Transplant Services in Peoria.

*(MORE)*

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Roan joined Gift of Hope's Volunteer Bureau only three months after receiving his heart transplant in 2002. Today, he serves as a team leader for Gift of Hope's north suburban volunteers. Among his programs this year were presentations with Gift of Hope staff at Finch University of Health Sciences, Condell Medical Center and Northwest Community Hospital during National Donate Life Month. Others include presentations at Glenbrook North High School, Antioch Upper Grade School and Lake Forest High School.

As a court probation officer, Gougis-Flowers has worked with judges and the Circuit Court of Cook County's courthouse in Markham to educate the African-American community about donation. She represents Gift of Hope at health fairs and expos with Prairie State College, Chicago State College and others. She joined the Gift of Hope African-American Task Force's South Suburban Chapter in February 2001.

Maria Garcia has been a member of Gift of Hope's Hispanic Task Force since its inception in 1995. Garcia's passion is fueled by her family's experiences with donation: Her brother, Fred Garcia, and her nephew, Jeff, have received living-related transplants. She herself received a kidney donated by her niece Marsela in 1994. Through the years, Maria has helped Gift of Hope address cultural issues and reach out to thousands of Hispanics.

Gift of Hope's Volunteer Bureau, African-American Task Force and Hispanic Task Force consist of more than 700 families of organ and tissue donors, transplant recipients, waiting list patients, healthcare professionals and others with a special interest in donation and transplantation advocacy.

Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network is the federally mandated not-for-profit organ procurement organization (OPO) working with hospitals and families in the northern three-fourths of Illinois and northwest Indiana. Its main office is located in Elmhurst with satellite offices in Springfield, Rockford, Peoria, Champaign and Bloomington-Normal.

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. For more information, call 888/307-DON8 or visit [www.giftofhope.org](http://www.giftofhope.org).

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