

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

‘DONATE LIFE’ CAMPAIGN FOCUSES ON THOUSANDS OF ILLINOISANS AWAITING TRANSPLANTS

CHICAGO, IL. (MARCH 18, 2003) — More than 4,400 patients registered at Illinois’ eight transplant centers are counting on the public – on people they don’t know – to save their lives by agreeing to organ donation.

Sadly, if past years are any indication, more than 300 of those patients won’t make it. They will die before a donated organ becomes available to give them a second chance at life.

The Illinois Coalition on Donation hopes to change that by convincing greater numbers of Illinois families to say “yes” to donating life through organ and tissue donation. The Illinois Coalition joins U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson in promoting “Donate Life” campaigns this April in conjunction with the nation’s first official observance of National Donate Life Month.

The decision to donate life is simple: Sign a donor card and tell your family you want to be an organ and tissue donor upon your death.

Throughout April, the Illinois Coalition on Donation and its member organizations will hold events in hospitals, schools, businesses and local communities to educate the public about donation and call attention to the need that affects families in every community. In support, Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich has issued a proclamation designating April as Illinois Donate Life Month; additionally, on March 5, the Chicago City Council passed a resolution sponsored by Ald. Billy Ocasio declaring Chicago Donate Life Month.

“We call on the public to take this time to talk to their families about the end-of-life decision to become a donor and save lives,” said Mike Henderson, Illinois Coalition community outreach chair and public education coordinator for Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Network. “Of the hundreds of events, of all the people we hope to reach with the ‘Donate Life’ message, it all comes down to saving the lives of those 4,400 people here in Illinois waiting for transplants. We honor those who have made the decision to donate.”

For a schedule of April events and programs, visit www.giftofhope.org or www.mts-stl.org. To request a reference kit on donation, a local program or donor awareness materials, call the Illinois Coalition on Donation at 888/307-DON8.

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