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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rockford observes National Minority Donor Awareness Day

Elmhurst, ILL. (JULY 7, 2003) -Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network's African-American Task Force (AATF) Rockford Chapter will host "Unity for Life? Donor Fair" to celebrate National Minority Donor Awareness Day Friday, Aug. 1.

The fair will take place at Gray's Foods grocery store at 1414 S. Main St. from 9 am to 3 pm. Activities include children's games; a blood drive; bone marrow registration for the National Marrow Donor Program; and musical entertainment. Gift of Hope's Hispanic Task Force (HTF) is providing a showing of an organ and tissue donation awareness video that features HTF spokesperson, Mexican pop singer Tatiana. A Spanish/English interpreter will also be available.

Local celebrities expected to attend the event include the Forest City (Rockford) Gladiators from the North American Football League, former Rockford Mayor Charles Box and state Sen. Chuck Jefferson.

National Minority Donor Awareness Day was established in 1996 as an intensive awareness campaign reaching out to all ethnic groups. It focuses on donation misconceptions and issues specific to minorities. The objective is to promote healthy living and to increase the number of people who sign donor cards, have family discussions and become donors. Additionally, the national observance increases awareness of the conditions leading to the need for a transplant that occur with greater frequency in minority populations.

The Gift of Hope African-American Task Force works to empower African-Americans to save lives through organ and tissue donation. Its members include transplant recipients, donor family members and advocates working together to educate other African-Americans about the critical need for donation in their communities.

The Task Force conducts hundreds of education programs every year through its Chicago, North Shore, South Suburban, Northwest Indiana and Rockford chapters. For more information, contact Jack Lynch, Gift of Hope Director of Community Affairs at 630/758-2732.

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. Established in 1986, Gift of Hope is among the largest of the nation's 59 OPOs. Its main office is located in Elmhurst, a west suburb of Chicago, with satellite offices in Springfield, Rockford, Peoria, Champaign and Bloomington-Normal.

For more information about the Rockford event, contact Julie Steller at 815-258-4419.