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Decatur racing veteran competes in Summernationals to honor young hero

Elmhurst, ILL. (MAY 27, 2003) - Robert James Fuchs loved auto racing, especially dirt track racing, says his parents James and Luanna. Robert passed away in December 1997. But he left behind a legacy: He saved lives by becoming an organ and tissue donor.

To honor Robert's memory, James and Luanna Fuchs teamed with Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network to promote organ and tissue donation awareness at several United Midwest Promoters (UMP) Summernationals Series late model and modified stock car races throughout Illinois. The series stops at more than 20 different tracks in 10 states, including the Illinois tracks Fairbury American Legion Speedway, Fairbury; Spoon River Speedway, Canton; Macon Speedway, Decatur; and Farmer City Raceway, Farmer City.

The Gift of Hope #7 race car will compete at these, as well as other UMP Summernationals Series races. Robert's favorite dirt track driver, Tom Rients of Decatur, will drive the #7 car at the Spoon River Speedway. Not only was the veteran driver Robert's racing hero, but Rients is also a three-time cornea transplant recipient.

The Fuchs family will work with volunteers to set up information booths at each of the four Illinois tracks. A Gift of Hope show car will also be present at all the races.

At the Spoon River Speedway information booth, volunteers will hand out donor awareness brochures, merchandise and t-shirts and conduct games and raffles. Drivers racing at Spoon River will be provided with Gift of Hope logo decals to place on their cars. The Fuchs family will award cash prizes to the highest finishing cars sporting Gift of Hope logos in the late model and modified categories.

The races are scheduled to take place:

- June 28, Fairbury American Legion Speedway, 703 E. Hickory St., Fairbury, www.fairburyspeedway.com
- July 9, Spoon River Speedway, 19776 N. Meller Road, Canton, www.spoonriverspeedway.com
- July 10, Macon Speedway, 5441 Ricky Drive, Decatur, www.maconspeedway.com
- July 11, Farmer City Raceway, PO Box 79, Macon, www.trackenterprises.com

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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 races, contact James and Luanna Fuchs at 309/383-3026

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