

Contact: Kim McCullough, Public Relations
Tel: 630/758-2736
Email: kmccullough@giftofhope.org

630/758-2600
www.giftofhope.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOTE TO EDITORS: Interview sources with donation and transplantation experts, patients awaiting transplant, transplant recipients and family members of donors can be arranged. See following for local events.

BOY IS NOT ALONE IN HIS QUEST TO LIVE National Donate Life Month takes place in April

ELMHURST, ILL. (APRIL 6, 2004) – Ten-year-old Ian Fitch dreams big. He wants to grow up to be a baseball player. But Ian has biliary atresia, a condition that hardens the liver. Before he can achieve his dreams, he must receive a healthy liver.

Ian is not alone. More than 83,000 men, women and children, including more than 4,400 patients in Illinois, are waiting on the national transplant list for a lifesaving organ. They are counting on the public—on people they don't know—to save their lives by agreeing to organ donation.

This April, the Illinois Coalition on Donation hopes to alleviate this organ shortage by convincing more people to donate life through organ and tissue donation. Coalition members are observing the nation's second National Donate Life Month throughout Illinois with events and campaigns in hospitals, schools and businesses to educate the public about donation and call attention to the need that affects families everywhere.

Last year President George W. Bush called upon U.S. citizens to sign donor cards and to be screened for bone marrow donation. He also urged healthcare professionals, volunteers, educators, government agencies and private organizations to help raise awareness of the important need for donors in communities throughout our nation.

The national “Donate Life” campaign is to draw attention to the critical need for donation and encourage individuals to become organ and tissue donors. The campaign message is simple: Be a hero. Sign a donor card and tell your family—so that patients awaiting transplants can receive a second chance at life.

The Illinois Coalition on Donation is one of more than 45 regional coalitions and 50 national businesses and associations that make up the national Coalition on Donation, a not-for-profit alliance stressing the importance of donation through national media and awareness campaigns. Illinois coalition members include the American Liver Foundation-Illinois Chapter; American Red Cross-Tissue Services; Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network; Heartland Lions Eye Bank; Illinois Department of Public Health, Division of Transplantation; Illinois Eye-Bank, MEBTC; Illinois Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Awareness Program; Mid-America Transplant Services; Minority Organ/Tissue Transplant Education Program, Chicago Office; National Kidney Foundation of Illinois; and Organ Transplant Support, Inc.

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

(MORE)

Among the events taking place during National Donate Life Month in April are:

Chicago area

- **Wednesday, April 14, 10 am - 3 pm - "Be a Hero: Save a Life" health fair at Edward Hospital, 801 S. Washington St., Naperville.** Edward Hospital's health fair will take place in the lobby of the facility's Heart Hospital. It will feature informational exhibits on such topics as living will documents, cancer control & prevention, mental health awareness, pet first aid, poison control and transportation/vehicle safety. Blood pressure screening and childhood immunizations will be conducted. A blood drive is also scheduled to take place 11 am - 3 pm. Gift of Hope organ and tissue donor cards will be offered to all those attending the fair.
- **Saturday, April 17, 7:30 pm - Gift of Hope Day, Chicago Fire Major League Soccer at Soldier Field, 425 E. McFetridge Drive.** Major League Soccer and the Chicago Fire will join Gift of Hope to celebrate the gift of life at the team's home opener against the Dallas Burn. In addition to information booths, video board announcements and other special activities bringing awareness to donation, a special half-time presentation will honor those who have given the gift of life, as well as their families.
- **Monday, April 19, 11:30 am - 1:30 pm - "Give an autograph, get an autograph" with Oldies 104.3, Prudential Plaza, One Prudential Plaza (130 E. Randolph St.), Chicago.** Radio station Oldies 104.3 WJMK teams with Gift of Hope to host donor registration events featuring select Chicago Bears players.
- **Tuesday, April 20, 11:30 am - 1:30 pm - "Give an autograph, get an autograph" at 500 W. Monroe St., Chicago.**
- **Wednesday, April 21, 11:30 am - 1:30 pm - "Give an autograph, get an autograph" at AC Nielsen building, 152 N. Martingale Rd., (Woodfield Corporate Center), Schaumburg.**
- **Thursday, April 22, 11:30 am - 1:30 pm - "Give an autograph, get an autograph" at 181 W. Madison St., Chicago.**
- **Friday, April 23, 11:30 am - 1:30 pm - "Give an autograph, get an autograph" at 131 S. Dearborn St., Chicago.**
- **Sunday, April 25, 1 pm - 14th Annual Tree Planting Ceremony and Donor Dedication at Naperville Central High School, 440 W. Aurora Ave.** Each year, Organ Transplant Support—a Naperville-based organization for donor families and transplant recipients—plants a tree to remember and honor donors and their families at Naper Settlement. The ceremony will be held indoors at Naperville Central High School. Following the ceremony, participants will walk to Naper Settlement for the tree planting.
- **Saturday, April 10, - Entry deadline for the McClean County "Life Goes On" essay contest.** All McClean County nursing and medical students are invited to submit essays for the contest, which is sponsored by the Bloomington Life Goes On Committee. Two \$500 "Life Goes On" scholarships, as well as honorable mentions, will be awarded at a dinner banquet to be held April 22 at Interstate Center in Bloomington. The entry deadline has been extended to April 10. For more information, contact the Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Program at 800/210-2106.

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Central Illinois

- **Saturday, April 17, noon - Hoops for Hope at John A. Logan College, 700 Logan College Rd., Carterville.** Local teams will strive to shoot 5,000 baskets to coincide with the nearly 5,000 people who are waiting for transplants. Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White and the Jesse White Tumblers will attend the shoot-out.
- **Friday, April 23, 4 pm - Ray Simmons Memorial Walk, 1707 N. 12th St., Quincy.** Ray Simmons was a liver recipient who passed away in 2003. The group will walk in memory of Simmons—starting at the Quincy Outpatient Clinic and ending at Blessing Hospital, where a memorial garden is being planned, along with a plaque honoring all recipients, donors and their families, as well as those waiting for transplants. A reception will follow at the hospital.
- **Saturday, April 24, noon - "Life Goes On" at White Oaks Mall, Springfield.** The mall-wide "Life Goes On" event features blood pressure screening, bone marrow testing, a blood mobile, and a live broadcast from White Oaks Mall. The Jesse White Tumblers will perform at noon, and are sponsored by St. John's Hospital and Prairie Heart Institute.

Northern Illinois

- **Thursday, April 1 through Monday, May 31 - discounted golf rates for those intending to donate, Mondays- Fridays and after 1 pm on weekends & holidays at Wolf Hollow Golf Club, 6546 Shippy Road, Lena.** The golf club offers 18 holes of golf, half a cart and one bucket of balls for \$25 to all golfers who show proof of their intent to donate as evidenced by a signed donor card or Illinois Driver's License.
- **Friday, April 9, 7 pm - "Life Goes On Night" at the Rockford IceHogs hockey game, Rockford Metro Centre, Elm Street.** The first 1,000 children will receive complimentary IceHogs jerseys.
- **Saturday, April 10, 6:30 - 11 am - Red Shoe Run for Donor Awareness at Rock River College Educational Path, 3301 N. Mulford Rd., Rockford.** The Red Shoe Run for Donor Awareness is a competitive event that honors donor and recipient families. This year it will raise money to help the National Marrow Donor Program; the raised funds will be used to cover the costs of blood testing for prospective marrow donors. Local celebrity Sue Mroz will host the awards ceremony.
- **Friday and Saturday, April 16 - 17, 5 - 10 pm (Friday), 3 - 9 pm (Saturday) - "The Art of Hope" show at Rockford's Spring ArtScene 2004, 317 Market Street Gallery.** 317 Market Street Gallery's second-floor guest gallery show brings together selected artists who share survival and healing following illness, crises or loss. It also brings renewed awareness to the need for donation. Featured artists include Deborah Newton, owner and curator, and Mark Clodius, local artist, designer and jeweler with Clodius & Co. Jewelers.
- **Friday, April 23, 4 - 9 pm - "Hope Springs Eternal" at ArtSpace Gallery, Clock Tower Resort & Convention Center, E. State Street, Rockford.** Part of Rockford's Spring ArtScene 2004, "Hope Springs Eternal" promotes healing, as well as donor awareness. The door prize is a signature piece designed by award-winning local artist, designer and jeweler Mark Clodius of Clodius & Co. Jewelers.