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Editors Note: Brief bios of Team Illinois athletes available for interview follows.

Illinois athletes go for the gold at US Transplant Games **Biennial event also observing 50 years of transplantation**

CHICAGO, IL. (JULY 22, 2004) — Ray Pearson is going for the gold.

Not long ago, the Rockford mechanical design engineer wasn't sure whether he had a chance to live, much less a chance to compete with other athletes eyeing a shot at Team USA for the 2005 World Games.

Pearson, 53, is among the 51 Team Illinois athletes and more than 2000 other athletes from across the country competing in the biennial US Transplant Games July 28 to Aug. 1 at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. More than 10,000 transplant recipient athletes, donor families, transplant professionals and others are expected to attend the Games – which will also celebrate 50 years of lifesaving transplantation.

As a competitor, Pearson wants to win. As a transplant recipient, he wants to show the world that donors save lives.

Pearson received a double-lung transplant almost exactly two years ago, on July 28, 2002. At the Games, Pearson will compete in the long jump, the 100-meter, team volleyball and a 5K race.

He will also meet the family who gave him his second chance at life – the family of an 18-year-old high-school graduate, cross-country runner and outdoorsman who was killed in a motorcycle accident and became an organ donor. The family will participate in the 5K race with Pearson and his family.

In addition to Pearson, Team Illinois athletes hail from Alsip, Aurora, Berwyn, Bloomington, Champaign, Chicago, Deerfield, DeKalb, East Moline, East Peoria, Elk Grove, Elmhurst, Evanston, Gibson City, Gurnee, Hainesville, Hanover Park, Highland Park, Huntley, Joliet, Lake Forest, Lansing, Lindenhurst, Lodge, Lombard, Machesney Park, Moline, Morton, Naperville, Oak Lawn, Oak Park, Orland Park, Palos Park, Pekin, Roscoe, Roselle, Schaumburg, Urbana, Wauconda, Wilmette and Zion.

The Games are coordinated by the National Kidney Foundation and supported by organizations throughout the country to raise awareness for lifesaving donation and transplantation. In Illinois, this includes the National Kidney Foundation of Illinois and Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, the federally designated organ procurement organization responsible for coordinating lifesaving donation in Illinois and northwest Indiana.

(MORE)

(TRANSPLANT GAMES – PAGE 2 of 3)

More than 83,000 people -- including more than 4,400 in Illinois -- are waiting for lifesaving organ transplants. Even though Illinois' rates of donation and transplantation are among the nation's highest, the state -- as well as the rest of the country -- continues to experience an organ shortage.

Nationally, 17 people die every day waiting for lifesaving organ transplants and more than 100 others -- one every 13 minutes -- are added to the national transplant waiting list.

For information about Team Illinois, visit <http://davidgoldmanwebdesign.com/teamillinois2004/>.

For more information about the US Transplant Games, visit www.kidney.org/recips/athletics/tgames/.

For more information about organ and tissue donation, visit www.giftofhope.org.

Team Illinois athletes available for interview are:

- Team Illinois Managers Mack and Gina Baxter of Schaumburg. Mack Baxter, a Schaumburg High School social studies teacher, received a lifesaving liver transplant in May 2001 and will compete in bowling at the Games.
- Edwin Burke of Chicago, who received a liver transplant in March 2003. Burke, who works for the Illinois Department of Transportation, met the family of his donor, Rick Thomas of Springfield, earlier this year. A first-time Games competitor, Burke will compete in golf.
- Eight-year-old Erin Fitzgerald of Morton, who received a donated kidney from her father, Patrick, in December 1997. At the Games, she will compete in the long jump, 50-meter dash and softball throw. At the 2002 Games, she won gold medals in the 50-meter dash and softball throw.
- Kimberly Frederick, a Gibson City resident and teacher with the Iroquois Special Education Association, who received her second liver transplant in August 1993. Her donor was a 10-year-old boy who passed away and whose family agreed to donate his organs. After regaining her health, Frederick first competed in the US Transplant Games in 1998, winning a gold medal in bowling. She placed fifth in bowling at the 2000 games.
- Janice Gill of Orland Park, who received a kidney transplant in 1995. Gill is considered a Team Illinois "old timer": She attended her first Games in 1996, competing in golf, 5K and the long jump and winning a bronze medal. She won a bronze again in 1996, a bronze for volleyball in 1998 and bronze and silver medals in 2002 for swimming and volleyball. Of all the Games she's attended, the most significant moment so far was in 1998, when she carried the Team Illinois flag during opening ceremonies along with her mother, also a transplant recipient.
- David Goldman, an audio firm service manager from Deerfield, who received a kidney transplant in July 1986 and a pancreas transplant in June 1997. At the Games -- his third -- Goldman will compete in the softball throw, shotput and long jump.

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- Michael Henderson of Chicago, public education coordinator for Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, who received a kidney donated by his brother in January 2004. A three-time medal winner in basketball, the high jump and the long jump at the 2002 Games, Henderson will compete this year in basketball.
- Steven Levitin of Chicago, who received his heart transplant on New Year's Eve 1999. Levitin is close to the family of his donor, and attended commencement ceremonies to accept his donor's high school diploma on the day that his donor would have graduated. At his second Transplant Games, Levitin is competing in golf.
- Debbie Madlener of Wilmette, who received a kidney donated by her mother in June 2000, and a pancreas donated by an anonymous deceased donor in June 2002. A first-time Games athlete, Madlener will compete in badminton, table tennis and the 5K.
- John Lulewicz of Crete, whose wife of 33 years died in December 1997 and became an organ/tissue donor. Lulewicz is Donor Family Captain for Team Illinois.
- Middle school teacher David Meyer of Pekin, who received a kidney transplant in January 2000, will compete in basketball, volleyball, badminton, table tennis and track. In his first Games competition in 2002, he won a gold medal with Team Illinois' basketball team "Spare Parts" and placed second in volleyball.
- Cathy Ostry of Elk Grove Village, who received a kidney donated by her husband, Rich, in November 1997. The Ostrys serve as "Living Donor" Captains for Team Illinois.
- Kara Perkins of East Peoria, who received a heart transplant in October 1999, thanks to a donated heart from a 21-year-old woman. Born with a congenital heart defect that slowly worsened, she did not have the energy to swim or participate in any sport before her transplant. After transplant, she began swimming at the YMCA and now swims daily. This is her first trip to the Games.
- Jeff Schiff, a retired business owner in Schaumburg, who received a donated kidney from his wife Nancy on April 5, 2000. A lifelong athlete, Schiff first participated in the 2002 Games and medalled in table tennis (gold), volleyball (silver) and softball throw (bronze). This year, he is Team Captain of Athletes for Team Illinois and will compete in table tennis, volleyball, basketball, the 100-yard-dash and the softball throw. Schiff will travel to Australia in September to compete in the IX Australian Transplant Games in Adelaide.
- Quantell Wood, 14, of Chicago, who received a liver transplant in May 2001. A first-time Games athlete, he will compete in the softball throw and 50-meter dash.

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