



Illinois Coalition On Donation

Talk to your family about organ & tissue donation

News

For immediate release

Contact: Kim McCullough, Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network
630/758-2736 or kmccullough@giftofhope.org

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Connie Payton, Walgreens Corp., Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White to help kick off donation education initiative

CHICAGO, IL. (JUNE 4, 2004)— Connie Payton joins Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White, Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network President/CEO Jerry Anderson and Walgreens Corp. officials next week to announce a new statewide initiative educating high school students about organ and tissue donation.

At a 10 a.m. news conference June 8 at Dunbar Vocational Career Academy, the school's football players, students, faculty and staff will be on hand to help officials announce a new partnership of the NFL's "Youth for Life: Remember Walter Payton" program and the Illinois Coalition on Donation, funded through a grant from Walgreens Corp.

Components of the new program include classroom and Web-based education at high schools throughout Illinois, awareness and donor sign-up booths at Bears 2004-05 training camp and home games, and Chicago Bears appearances at high school programs during the school year.

"The Chicago Bears and Youth for Life: Remembering Walter Payton bring so much attention to our mission of saving lives through organ donation, and Walgreens is to be commended for its commitment to our success by funding this new partnership," Illinois Coalition on Donation Chair Kara Kelly.

The initiative unites two of Illinois' most successful donation education programs. The goal is to provide students with information before they are asked at state driver's license facilities whether they wish to enroll in the state organ/tissue donor registry. The registry is coordinated by the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

"Giving someone a second chance at life is a wonderful gift," White said. "By teaching our young people early on about organ and tissue donation, we help them make informed decisions when they are asked about the donor registry when they obtain their driver's license or identification card."

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Youth for Life: Remembering Walter Payton is a not-for-profit campaign to educate and encourage young adults to register as organ donors. It was founded by Brittney Payton, daughter of late Chicago Bears star Walter Payton, along with Mark Pendleton, Erin Kinsella and John McCaskey. Walter Payton, who retired in 1987 as the NFL's all-time leading rusher, died in 1999 of a liver ailment while waiting for an organ donation.

Since 1998, the Illinois Coalition on Donation has provided classroom instruction on donation through a program called “Share Your Life, Share Your Decision.” Developed by the Illinois coalition, the program has been used or adapted by other states and regional organizations in other countries. It also is part of a national donation education package launched last month by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson.

“Share Your Life” is now taught to more than 35,000 Illinois high school students each year. That number is expected to increase through implementation of the Youth of Life/Illinois Coalition partnership. In addition, for regional superintendents of schools, the partnership’s materials and program will help satisfy their mandate under legislation enacted in fall 2003 to distribute curricular materials on donation and transplantation in their districts.

The need for donation is critical. More than 84,000 people in the United States—including 4,400 patients registered at Illinois’ eight transplant centers—await lifesaving organ transplants. An estimated one in 20 Americans will require some type of medical tissue transplant during a lifetime.

Organs and tissues from a single donor can help more than 25 individuals. Everyone, no matter how young or old, can be a lifesaver by choosing to be an organ and tissue donor. To become a donor:

1. Sign the organ/tissue donor portion on the back of your Illinois driver's license or ID card directly on the plastic with a ballpoint pen. Two people, preferably family members, should sign as witnesses.
2. Join the Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry. When you visit a Driver Services facility, you will be asked if you want to sign the back of your driver's license and join the registry. You also can join the registry by filling out an organ donor card and mailing it to the Secretary of State’s office, by calling 800/210-2106 or by visiting www.cyberdriveillinois.com.
3. Tell your family. In Illinois, family consent is required before donation can occur.

For more information about organ and tissue donation, call the Illinois Coalition on Donation at 888/307-DON8 or visit www.giftofhope.org.

For information about Youth For Life: Remembering Walter Payton, call (847) 739-5325 or log on to www.yflnfl.org.

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