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Faith communities urged celebrate National Donor Sabbath

ELMHURST, Ill. (November 1, 2005) – National Donor Sabbath is an interfaith observance of the gift of life through organ and tissue donation, observed by faith communities and donation/transplantation agencies throughout the country. Leaders of all religions are encouraged to share the message that giving life to others through donation is a noble and selfless act that supports their religious beliefs. It is also a time to remember those families who suffered the loss of a loved one, and yet gave the greatest gift of all: Life. Thoughts and prayers also focus on the thousands of men, women and children who continue to wait desperately for needed organs and tissues to save or improve their lives.

All major religions in the United States support organ and tissue donation as one of the highest acts of compassion and humanitarianism. Yet, “it’s against my religion” is one of the most common reasons family give when they don’t agree to donate, according to officials with the agencies that coordinate organ and tissue donation in Illinois.

To bridge that gap in understanding, Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network urges faith communities to plan prayer services and programs in observance of National Donor Sabbath, Nov. 11-13. The three-day event is an interfaith observance of the.

Individuals, religious leaders and communities are asked to observe National Donor Sabbath by:

- Arranging for displays of green ribbons at places of worship, symbolizing support for organ and tissue donation.
- Speaking or arranging for speakers on the religious aspects of donation at worship services, youth classes or adult ministry groups.
- Arranging information tables in the community.
- Writing letters to the editor of local newspapers.
- Writing open letters or encouraging articles about donation in religious bulletins or newsletters.

Gift of Hope provides free materials and support for all of these activities. Call 888/307-3668 to request a Donor Sabbath Kit, including a poster, a bulletin insert, brochures and an order form for materials that can be used during Donor Sabbath or any time of year.

(MORE)

Currently there are more than 4,500 Illinoisans awaiting lifesaving organ transplants, more than 100 of those waiting are children under the age of 18 years. One donor can save and enhance the lives of 25 people. When you make the decision to be a donor, make sure that you share your decision with family members.

Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network is the federally designated not-for-profit organ procurement organization (OPO) responsible for coordinating organ and tissue donation in the northern three-quarters of Illinois and northwest Indiana. Since its inception in 1986, Gift of Hope has coordinated donations that have saved the lives of more than 10,000 organ transplant recipients, and improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of tissue transplant recipients.

For more information on organ and tissue donation, contact Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network at 888/307-DON8 or www.giftofhope.org.

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