



Your life. Your decision. Another gift of hope.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ILLINOISANS ENCOURAGED TO GIVE THE GIFT OF HOPE DURING
NATIONAL DONATE LIFE MONTH**

New Illinois Registry Guarantees that Individuals' Wishes will be Respected

CHICAGO – Secretary of State Jesse White and Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network President and CEO Jerry Anderson today called upon Illinois residents to register this month to become organ and tissue donors.

April is National Donate Life Month, a time designated for hosting events in schools, businesses, hospitals and communities throughout the state to educate the public about organ and tissue donation. Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White, whose office manages the new Life Goes On organ/tissue donor registry, will attend press conferences and donor drives throughout Illinois in an effort to encourage people to sign up in the new registry. Television and radio ads featuring Illinoisans waiting for lifesaving transplants will air in cities and towns across the state.

Gift of Hope is the federally designated not-for-profit organ procurement organization that is responsible for coordinating organ and tissue donation in most of Illinois. The organization also offers support services to a donor's family after a donation and fulfills an important role as a public information resource for those considering donor registration.

"We're asking Illinoisans to take the simple yet critical step to help save the lives of thousands of people whose survival depends on an organ donation," said Jarold Anderson, President and CEO, Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network. "Join the new registry. Make sure your desire to give the gift of life is fulfilled."

Illinoisans can register to become an organ donor by clicking on www.giftofhope.org or www.LifeGoesOn.com; by visiting any Illinois state driver's license facility; or by calling the Illinois Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Program at 1-800-210-2106.

This year's push is particularly important due to a change in Illinois law that went into effect on January 1, 2006.

Previously, organ & tissue donor registration did not guarantee that an individual's wishes would be fulfilled. A family member or other legal authority was required to give additional consent for you to donate. As a result, nearly 20 percent of consenting donors had their decision overturned.

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(DONATE LIFE MONTH – ADD ONE)

Today, registration in the new donor registry makes your decision legally binding. Additional witnesses or family consent is no longer required, although family members will be notified and are able to receive information and services through Gift of Hope regarding the donation.

Donors who registered before Jan. 1, 2006 need to re-register with the Secretary of State's office to ensure their wishes are respected.

"Donor registration is an excellent way to dedicate yourself and make a difference by helping save the lives of others," said White. "This year we are focused on raising awareness for Illinois' new donor registry. We want everyone to join this new registry because it ensures the donor's wishes will be honored. The new registry will lead to increased transplants and save more lives. We are pleased to work with Gift of Hope as our partner to get out this message."

About Gift of Hope

Established in 1986, Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network is the federally designated not-for-profit organ procurement organization dedicated to 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 helped hundreds of thousands of other patients receive needed tissue transplants.

As one of 58 organ procurement organizations (OPOs) that make up the nation's organ donation system, Gift of Hope works with 183 hospitals in its donation service area. Its administration and staff serve as healthcare administrators and professionals, trained clinicians and community educators in helping evaluate potential donors, coordinate the donation process, provide family support services, assist hospitals with donation policies and procedures and educate the more than 11.3 million people in our service area about donation and how to register as a donor. Visit www.giftofhope.org

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