

Du Quoin Kidney Transplant Recipient Featured in Statewide Commercial

DU QUOIN - As the number of Illinois patients in need of lifesaving organ transplants surpasses 4,700 for the first time, Donate Life Illinois and Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White encourage everyone to take 30 seconds during National Donate Life Month in April to register as organ/tissue donors and offer those patients a second chance at life.

National Donate Life Month is designated for hosting events at businesses, colleges, hospitals and communities throughout the state to educate the public about organ/tissue donation and encourage donor registration. White, whose office manages the state organ/tissue donor registry, will join organ/tissue donation officials, donor family members, transplant patients and donation advocates at press conferences and donor registration drives throughout Illinois in an effort to encourage people to sign up in the new registry. Television and radio ads featuring Illinoisans who are organ donor recipients or from donor families will air in cities and towns across the state.

One transplant recipient featured in the commercials is 72-year old Du Quoin resident, Don Smith. Smith, who received a kidney transplant in May of 1994, is actively involved as a speaker for Jesse White's organ/tissue donor program, helping spread the word about the need to register to groups and organizations throughout Illinois.



"It's an incredible honor to be able to help get the word out about the importance of registering as an organ donor," said Smith. "A registered organ donor is responsible for saving my life and I can only hope that others will take 30 seconds out of their day to ensure they've re-registered in the new registry."

"Most Illinois residents are still unaware of the new registry and the fact that anyone who signed up to be a donor prior to January 1, 2006 needs to re-register," said Dave Bosch, president of Donate Life America and chair of the Illinois campaign. "It literally takes 30 seconds online, and the difference could mean a second chance at life for someone else."

Under Illinois' previous "donor intent" registry, additional consent was required from family members or other legal authority for donation to take place. Potential donors' wishes were overridden nearly 20% of the time—had those wishes been carried out, more than 100 lifesaving organ transplants could have taken place each year.

The 6 million Illinoisans in the old registry could not be transferred to the new registry, which is why previously registered donors need to re-register. Currently, more than 1.8 million people have joined the new registry, and Donate Life Illinois anticipates Illinois will reach the 2 million mark by the end of National Donate Life Month.

Signing the back of your license no longer makes you a donor in Illinois. Illinoisans need to join the new donor registry by visiting the Donate Life Illinois campaign site at www.IAmAreYou.org; visiting any Illinois state driver's license facility; or by calling the Illinois Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Program at 800/210-2106.