

# Herald & Review

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## Donate Life getting out word to donors

*Campaign encouraging  
Illinois residents to sign up  
for new organ, tissue registry*

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DECATUR — More than 90 percent of U.S. residents are aware of organ donation, according to studies by the Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network.

Now, however, marks the time to move from awareness to action.

Each year, more than 250 people in Illinois die waiting for an organ transplant. January 2007 marked the official launch of Donate Life Illinois, an 18-month campaign to motivate Illinois residents to register in the state's new organ and tissue donor registry.

The Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry is a confidential computerized database managed by the office of Illinois Secretary of State Jesse

White. Currently, nearly 1.5 million people are registered in Illinois' new first-person consent donor registry, which was created by state law on Jan. 1, 2006, said Scott Meis, spokesman for Donate Life Illinois.

"We had 6 million donors in the old registry; only one-third of people are aware there is a new registry," Meis said.

The old registry was run through the signing of a driver's license, which gave intent to donate, but family consent also was needed at the time of death. Now, an individual can give full and confidential consent to donate.

"Over the years, we found that nearly 20 percent who registered had their wishes overturned at the time of death," Kim McCullough, manager of public relations and donor family services at Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network in Elmhurst. "That means there were more than 100 transplants that could have taken place each year."

The campaign is part of a nationwide program, called Donate Life America, which includes more than 40 states working to register donors. The goal for the campaign is to register

### MORE INFO

For more information on Donate Life Illinois, go online to [www.IAmAreYou.org](http://www.IAmAreYou.org).

To join the new First-Person Consent Organ/Tissue Donor Registry, call 1-800-210-2106 or go online to [www.lifegoeson.com](http://www.lifegoeson.com).

at least 3.5 million donors in its 18-month run, focusing on reaching out to communities, businesses and colleges to raise awareness of the need to re-register, Meis said.

The campaign is led by Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, which is collaborating with a coalition of agencies responsible for donor registration and education programs in Illinois.

"The point of the campaign is to get the issue out in front of people," McCullough said. "You can just hop online and register and know you've made your decision. This could make a huge difference in saving lives."

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