I recently received a letter from a father who wanted me to know how "happy and proud" he was of his son's decision to participate in the Illinois Organ Donor Registry. His son told him that he joined the registry because it was a "worthy and noble thing to do." Once again, I am reminded of the hard work and dedication of those of you who face the public day after day and ask the question, "Do you want to join the Organ/Tissue Donor Registry?" One of you asked that young man, and he seized the opportunity to join.

The statewide average for participation in the Illinois Donor Registry is now more than 48 percent, and we continue to reach more people every day. However, there is still a critical need for organs, and many of the nearly 5,000 people on the waiting list in Illinois will die before an organ becomes available.

Because of your commitment to the Organ/Tissue Donor Program, you have helped give families hope and, for many, renewed life. I applaud your commitment to giving each person who walks into our facilities the opportunity to join the Organ/Tissue Donor Registry. You are truly making a difference in people's lives.

Jesse White

Jesse White
Illinois Secretary of State

Life Goes On

Secretary of State Jesse White • Fall 2003

A newsletter for Secretary of State facility employees and other organ/tissue donation advocates

Galena facility surpasses 70% participation

Congratulations to the Galena Driver Services facility staff on reaching 74 percent customer participation in the Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry — the highest of any facility in the state.

Photo courtesy of Amy Alderman, Galena Gazette.

Secretary of State Jesse White presented Galena facility manager Todd Steinke with a plaque at the facility in northwest Illinois on July 11. "I am so proud of the efforts of this facility's staff to have three out of every four persons who do business here say "YES" to organ/tissue donation," said Secretary White. "I commend Todd and his staff for their commitment to the Organ/Tissue Donor Program."

As of July 31, 2003, 56 facilities had reached the 60 percent mark, and 47 had attained the 50 percent level. Statewide, facilities have an average of about 48 percent participation in the registry.

More facilities receive 60% decals

Three Secretary of State Driver Services facilities recently earned their 60% "Life Goes On" window decals, designating that 60 percent of their customers participate in the Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry. These three facilities join 53 others in receiving the 60 percent designation.

Debbie Buford, left, manager of the Mattoon Driver Services facility, and employees Leah Rawlings and Donna Hernandez were presented their facility's 60% window decal. Debbie said that they are proud to reach 60 percent participation and that they all work very hard to make sure everyone knows about organ/tissue donation.

Mick Highland, manager of the Charleston Driver Services facility, was awarded his facility's 60% window decal. "I am proud to place this on our window," said Mick. "The employees of this facility take organ/tissue donation very seriously."

Left to right, Rich McMahon, president of Organ Transplant Support, Inc. of Naperville; Sandy Kerrutt, Wheaton facility manager; and Dolph McCall, Secretary of State district facility manager, were on hand to receive the Wheaton facility's 60% decal. Sandy, a kidney/pancreas recipient, and her staff have done a terrific job getting customers to say "YES" to organ donation.

Co-worker Connection

The Gift of Sight

Marsha Lenz knows that donating her husband's corneas four years ago helped restore sight for two Chicago-area residents. "It gave me a good feeling; sad but good," said Marsha, who works as a service representative at the Freeport Driver Services facility.

Marsha's husband, John, developed diabetes as a teenager and then heart problems as an adult. His kidneys were failing as a result of his diabetes, and he was about to be added to the organ transplant waiting list when his doctors discovered he had heart blockages. He succumbed to heart disease before he was added to the list. Shortly before John's death, Marsha had been in the process of being tested to see if she would be a kidney match for him and passed the preliminary tests. Donation was something Marsha knew she wanted to do. Because of her husband's overall health, many of his organs were not suitable for donation, but his corneas and heart valves were.

"The Organ Donor Program is such a great life saving program," said Marsha. "I can't say enough about it and the people it has helped." At her job at the Freeport facility, Marsha asks customers if they wish to join the Organ Donor Registry. She engages customers in conversation about organ donation if they are not sure about it or think they cannot donate for various reasons. Marsha has changed many people's views about donation through her job and through her own personal experiences with organ/tissue donation.

If you have questions about corneal transplants, please contact the Illinois Eye-Bank at 800-548-4703. If you or a family member has had a personal experience with organ or tissue donation and wish to share your story, please contact Liz Hager at 217-782-0578, Lhager@ilsos.net, or Margaret Pearson at 630-579-8711, Mpearson2@wideopenwest.com.

Focus on the Eye-Bank

The Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor Program works closely with a number of agencies committed to advancing organ and tissue donation. The Illinois Eye-Bank, a tissue procurement and recovery organization, "provides corneal tissue for transplantation, supports eye and vision research and promotes public awareness of the need for eye donors." Restoring sight to those whose sight has been lost due to accident, injury or progressive eye diseases is what the Illinois Eye-Bank is all about.

The Illinois Eye-Bank and Michigan Eye-Bank are known collectively as MEBTC — the Midwest Eye-Banks and Transplantation Center. MEBTC covers Michigan, the northern two-thirds of Illinois and northwest Ohio. Eye-Bank staff coordinates the tissue recovery and placement process, promotes public awareness of the need for more eye donors and participates in research of eye diseases.

The Eye-Bank
ILLINOIS Bloomington •

According to Chuck Pivoney, vice president of Illinois Operations for the Eye-Bank, "The key to having close relationships with others in organ/tissue donation is that we share a common goal. By working together and networking, we can all cover a wider area...together we can accomplish so much more."

The need for eye donors is steadily growing. "The population is aging, and we're seeing an increase in the elderly needing corneal transplants," said Pivoney. And more research is needed into eye diseases that afflict the older population. Additionally, more people are having LASIK eye surgery and other laser surgeries that alter the surface of the cornea so it cannot be donated later.

Although the Eye-Bank performs more than 100 corneal transplants each month (1,600 last year), a cornea transplant will help only 10 percent of those with blinding eye diseases. However, a single eye donor can help up to 10 people. Even though corneal transplants are becoming routine, corneas cannot be kept for long periods of time — ideally, they must be transplanted within 48 hours.

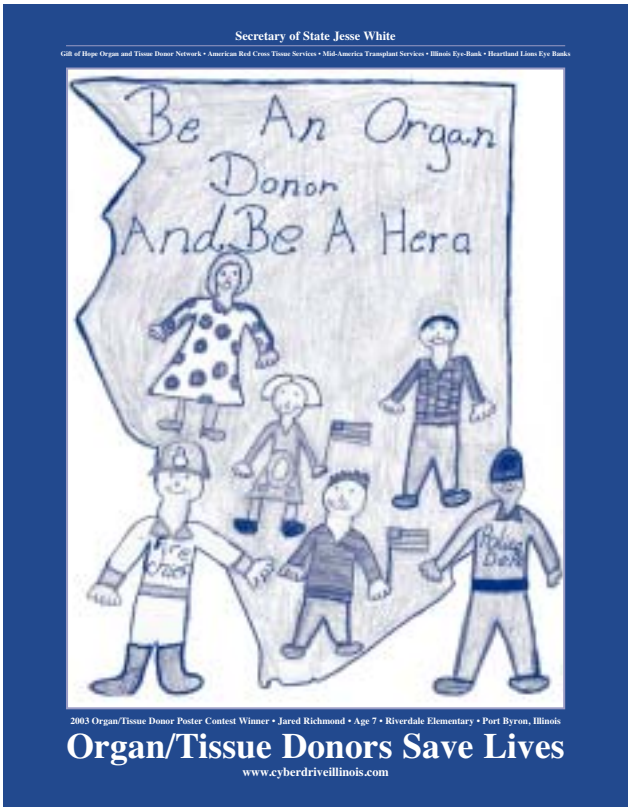
The Eye-Bank also provides eye tissue for the research of eye diseases, such as macular degeneration, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy and provides funding for preliminary research of blinding eye diseases.

LIFE GOES ON. BE AN

Poster wins AAMVA award

Secretary of State Jesse White's office received an AAMVA Regional Public Affairs and Consumer Education (PACE) Award for its 2003 "Organ/Tissue Donors Save Lives" poster. The artwork for the poster was created by Jared Richmond from Riverdale Elementary in Port Byron, who won first place in the Secretary of State's 2003 Organ Donor Poster Contest.

The award was presented July 10 at the Region III Conference in South Dakota. Regional winners are finalists for the international awards to be presented at the International Conference in Philadelphia in September.



Italian Eye Bank physicians visit Chicago

As guests of the Illinois Eye-Bank, members of the Italian Fondazione Banca Degli Occhi del Veneto (FBOV, Veneto Eye Bank Foundation) visited Chicago July 22 to exchange information. The program and luncheon were hosted by the Italian-American Chamber. The luncheon speaker was president of the Veneto Eye Bank, Piergiorgio Coin. Liz Hager, Secretary of State Organ Donor Program staff member, presented a history of Illinois' Organ Donor Program and a PowerPoint presentation on the development and maintenance of Illinois' Organ Donor Registry — the largest in the nation.

The Veneto Eye Bank is the only European eye bank to obtain accreditation from the Eye Bank Association of America. Last year, Veneto received nearly 4,000 donated corneas and more than 2,600 eye tissues. That same year, the 15 Eye Banks of Italy, including Veneto, received and processed more than 12,000 corneas, sending more than 5,300 healthy tissues to state hospitals and private institutions throughout Italy for transplantation.

ORGAN/TISSUE DONOR.

Q&A

Q Are Caucasians helped more by organ donation than African-Americans?

A Absolutely not. In fact, nine out of 10 African-Americans who undergo transplant surgery receive an organ donated by a Caucasian donor. Many times a genetic match makes for a more successful transplant but it may not possible at the time. (African-Americans make up 36 percent of those on waiting lists in Illinois.)

Q Can people "buy" their way to a higher spot on the waiting list?

A No one can "buy" their way to the top of the list. Choosing who gets a particular organ is based on how ill a person is, how long he or she has been on the waiting list, blood type and matching organ size.

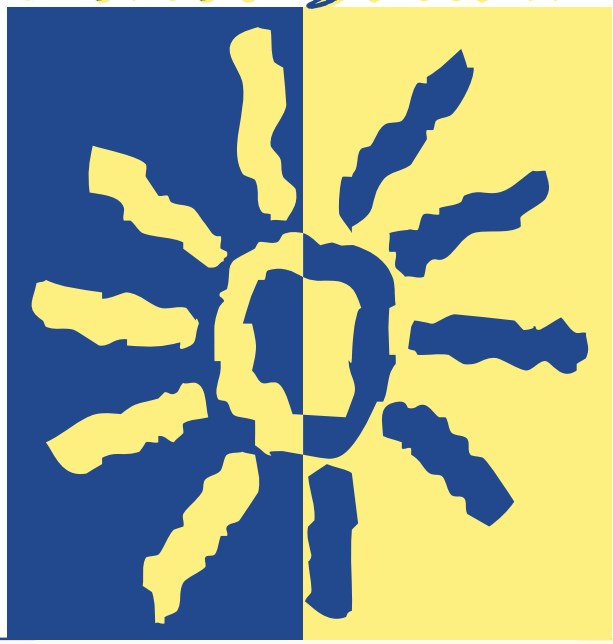
Q I have seen in the news where people have sold their own organs. Is this legal?

A No, it is illegal to sell organs in the United States. Reputable organ transplantation takes place only at authorized transplantation centers after a donor's family has been consulted and has agreed to donation. There is no cost to the donor's family or to the recipient for transplantation of organs.

Organ Donor Poster Contest

The 2004 Organ Donor Poster Contest entry forms have been mailed to all K-12 public and private schools in Illinois. The deadline to enter the contest is Dec. 31, 2003. If you know of a school that did not receive entry forms, please call 217-782-6258.

Donor Sabbath



On Nov. 14-16, 2003, Organ Donor Program staff and organ procurement agencies across the state will join clergy in raising awareness for organ/tissue donation and transplantation. The Illinois Coalition on Donation will distribute public awareness materials during the week. For more information on the events planned for the Donor Sabbath, please call 217-782-6258 or visit www.cyberdriveillinois.com.

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

- ✓ In Illinois, 108 children under age 18 are waiting for organs. Most are waiting for a liver.
- ✓ The Illinois Coalition on Donation has been invited to enter a float in the 2004 Rose Parade in Pasadena, California. The float will convey the positive organ/tissue message to millions of viewers on Jan. 1, 2004.
- ✓ Kidneys are the most transplanted organs in the United States. Of the 672 kidney donors in Illinois last year, nearly half (310) were living donors.
- ✓ Illinois has the largest donor registry in the nation with 5.6 million people.
- ✓ Every 14 minutes someone is added to the national organ transplant waiting list.

Courtesy of UNOS Web Site.

Jesse White, Secretary of State
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Life goes On

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