



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

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- CONTACT: Dave Druker
or
- CONTACT: Randy Nehrt

Secretary White Announces Organ Donor Week Activities

SPRINGFIELD — Secretary of State Jesse White is urging Illinois residents to consider organ and tissue donation and families to discuss the important issue in observance of Organ Donor Awareness Week, April 15-21.

"The tremendous need for organ donors cannot be stressed enough with 5,000 critically ill residents in Illinois currently awaiting organ transplants," said White. White's own sister, Doris Ivy, received a life-saving kidney transplant after a 3½-year wait.

White will launch efforts to increase the number of participants in the state's organ donor program with a tour to eight cities that have community-wide "Life Goes On" projects planned. Events are planned in Chicago, Peoria, Bloomington/Normal, Carbondale, Edwardsville, Quincy, Macon County and the Illinois Valley.

In each of the "Life Goes On" cities, a committee of activists in the transplant field has been working to develop activities to increase community awareness and participation. "This program is special because each group of people has put together projects that will work in their own area," said White.

Among the hundreds of activities planned for National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week include:

- 72,000 green ribbons have been distributed to volunteers who will wear them as a reminder of the critical need for transplants. Green ribbon ceremonies

have been planned in Bloomington, Peoria, Carbondale and Northern Illinois Valley where ribbons will be tied on trees.

- 13,500 Chicago police officers will be asked to wear green ribbon pins; Chicago firefighters and emergency personnel from other cities will also wear ribbons
- Fountains will be dyed green in Edwardsville and Carbondale
- Theater owners throughout Illinois are airing Organ Donation commercials free of charge to support White's efforts
- 240,000 CILCO customers received notices with their bills reminding them to sign up as organ donors
- Volunteers have decorated windows at the downtown Chicago Marshall Fields and the Decatur Library

Appearing with White in each city will be individuals whose lives have been profoundly impacted by the transplantation issue. In Decatur, Bloomington and Peoria, he will be joined by Stacy Bacon, the mother of 10-year-old Brianne Bacon who died of a brain tumor and whose organs saved four lives. The Bacons are featured in one of several new commercials being aired in April and May.

Although the Illinois' organ donor registry is the largest in the nation, thousands of Illinois residents who need transplants are unable to have life-saving transplants because of the shortage of donors. In Illinois, the waiting list increases about 20 percent each year.

"Over 5,000 people in Illinois are waiting right now," said Secretary White. "Nationally, more than 75,000 people need organs to survive."

White suggests that all residents check their driver's license to make sure that they are registered as potential donors. "If you are, be sure to discuss your feelings with your family," White said. "If you're not, call 1-800-210-2106 and we'll make sure that you're added."