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SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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Secretary of State Jesse White Announces Organ Donor Campaign

White Unveils New Commercial Featuring Message From Families who Lost Loved Ones 'Talk to Your Family'

CHICAGO — Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White kicked off Donate Life! month by unveiling the new organ donor campaign, focusing on the message - "talk to your family about your decision."

White joined members of the Illinois Coalition on Donation and the Chicago Fire soccer team to increase awareness for organ and tissue donation during a press conference at the Westin Michigan Avenue.

At the event, White unveiled a new organ donor commercial featuring Joe Cocker performing the Beatles song, "With A Little Help from My Friends." It is a rare occasion that the usage rights to the song by the Beatles are granted. The thirty-second piece features three people whose lives have been touched in some way by organ donation. The Beatles version of the song is featured in the radio commercials.

Kate Pianetto, Shawn Harrington and Angelo Tomasello remind people how important it is to talk to your family about becoming an organ donor.

"One of the families in the commercial never spoke to their loved one about organ donation before it was too late," White said. "They really bring home the message of how important it is to talk to your family about organ donation."

Pianetto, who works for Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, must ask for consent from families regarding organ and tissue donation and support those families throughout the

donation process. She helps families like Harrington and Tomasello.

Harrington's mother, Frinda, was 43 years old when she was killed following a home invasion. Even though the two had never discussed it, Shawn decided that organ donation was the right thing to do. "If she was here, and she was asked to donate, I knew she would," he said. Frinda's donation helped save the lives of three people: a 53-year-old man received her liver, a 56-year-old woman received her left lung, and a 61-year-old woman received her right lung.

Tomasello lost his 17-year-old daughter Celeste in an automobile accident. He said he would give anything to have her back, but he feels that donating Celeste's organs was not only the right thing to do, but it gave others a chance at life.

Celeste's left kidney and pancreas went to a 38-year-old husband and father. A 52-year-old wife and mother of four was the recipient of Celeste's right kidney. Her liver was transplanted into a 3-year-old boy and her cornea and various bone segments were transplanted into several donor recipients.

White lost his brother George in 1981.

"When my brother passed away, we had never talked about whether he wanted to be an organ donor," White said. "When I was asked about donating his organs, I said no. Maybe if we had discussed it beforehand, and there was more information available at the time, his organs could have provided life for others."

Ten years later, White's sister Doris received a kidney transplant, making White a true believer and advocate of the program.

Although Illinois has the largest donor registry nationwide, there are still more than 5,000 people in Illinois waiting for a transplant and more than 300 people in the state died last year while waiting.

Anyone can sign up for the organ donor registry, by:

1. Signing the organ/tissue donor portion on the back of your Illinois driver's license or ID card directly on the plastic with a ballpoint pen. Two people, preferably family members, should sign as witnesses.
2. Joining the Organ/Tissue Donor Registry. When you

visit a Driver Services facility, you will be asked if you want to sign the back of your driver's license and join the Registry. You also can join the Registry by filling out an organ donor card and mailing it to this office, by calling 1-800-210-2106 or by visiting my [Web site](#).

3. Telling your family. Hospitals will not remove any organs or tissue without permission from the donor's family.

White will attend events planned in communities throughout Illinois to highlight April as Donate Life month.

Representatives of the Illinois Coalition on Donation who participated in the event include: Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Network, Illinois Eye Bank, American Liver Foundation, National Kidney Foundation of Illinois, American Red Cross Tissue Service, Heartland Lions Eye Bank, Illinois Department of Public Health, Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, Mid-America Transplant Services, MOTTEP, and Organ Transplant Support Inc.