



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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Secretary of State Jesse White Announces Organ/Tissue Donor Campaign White Unveils New Commercial Focusing on those in Need of Transplants

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White kicked off Donate Life! month by unveiling a new organ donation campaign that highlights the journeys of two young people who are waiting for transplants.

The two children joined White and members of the Illinois Coalition on Donation and Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago during a press conference to unveil the campaign to increase awareness for organ and tissue donation.

"These commercials really put faces and voices on those who are in need and waiting for an organ," White said. "More than 290 people died in Illinois last year while waiting for transplants. Let's give others a second chance at life by signing up to be an organ and tissue donor."

Ian Fitch, a 10-year-old boy from Lake in the Hills, is featured in the new organ donor television commercial. The commercial will air on television and in movie theaters throughout the state during April, National Donate Life! Month.

"Just because you don't wear a costume, you can still be a hero," Ian says in the 60-second television spot featuring the song, *He's My Son* by Mark Schultz.

Ian was born with biliary atresia, a rare bile duct disorder that occurs in about one in 15,000 babies. The disease creates inflammation and blockage of the bile ducts.

Fifteen-year-old Tonisha Daniel of Dolton is featured in a radio commercial. The 60-second commercial, which includes the song *Keep Me In Your Heart* by Warren Zevon, highlights Tonisha, who suffers from cirrhosis and has been waiting for more than a year for a liver.

Tonisha's brother Antonio says in the commercial, "When I grow up and they ask me to be an organ donor, I will say yes because Tonisha means so much to me because she's my sister."

"People who have learned about donation ahead of time are many times more likely to donate if ever given the opportunity," said Jarold Anderson, President/CEO of Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network. "Thus, public awareness is crucial. We commend campaigns such as this one launched by Secretary White, because these efforts have made and continue to make a tremendous impact in our efforts here in Illinois to save and improve the lives of as many people as possible."

Although Illinois has the largest donor registry in the country, there are approximately 5,000 people in Illinois waiting for a transplant. Nationally, more than 83,000 people are waiting for transplant operations and every day 17 people on the waiting list die.

Anyone can become an organ donor 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 at www.cyberdriveillinois.com.
- 3) Telling your family. Organ and tissue donation will not take place without permission from the donor's family.

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

Representatives of the Illinois Coalition on Donation who participated in the event include: Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor 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 Research Foundation, Mid-America Transplant Services, MOTTEP, and Organ Transplant Support Inc.