

Giannoulas Shines Spotlight On Organ And Tissue Donation

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SPRINGFIELD - Kicking off National Donate Life Month in April, the Illinois Secretary of State's office is partnering with Illinois planetariums in conjunction with a national campaign to sign up new organ and tissue donors.

As part of the effort, Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulas announced his office will conduct special "SuperStar" donor sign-up drives on April 8 during the Great North American Solar Eclipse.

For the more than 4,000 Illinoisans waiting for organ donations, donors serve as “SuperStars,” shining bright and providing a second chance at life, said Giannoulas, whose office oversees the Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry.

“A single donor can save or improve the lives of as many as 25 people in need of a transplant,” Giannoulas said. “We need more ‘SuperStars’ of all ages, ethnicities and racial backgrounds to register and fill the critical need for organ and tissue donors. A more diverse donor pool increases the likelihood of finding suitable matches for those who wait.”

"The Adler's mission is to connect people to the Universe and each other under the sky we all share," said Jennifer Howell, director of Public Relations for the Adler. "In honor of those who are connected through organ donation, we are thrilled to partner with the Secretary of State for National Donate Life Month."

“Organ and tissue donation is a selfless decision that saves thousands of lives every year,” said Harry Wilkins, CEO of Gift of Hope, a federally designated procurement organization in Illinois. “All of us at Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network are proud of our collaboration with the Illinois Secretary of State to encourage Illinoisans to register as donors, ensuring that we honor those decisions to save and heal as many lives as possible.”

The Secretary of State is working with the Adler Planetarium in Chicago and the Southern Illinois University Carbondale Planetarium on April 8 to host special Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry sign-up events during the solar eclipse.

The office will also have sign-up opportunities on-site at various planetariums around the state during the month with registration tables and regional coordinators available to answer questions at the following dates and locations:

- April 5 & 6: Illinois State University Planetarium, Normal
- April 8 & 14: Dome Planetarium, Peoria
- April 16: Herbert Trackman Planetarium at Joliet Junior College, Joliet.

Illinois has one of the largest registries in the nation, averaging around 20,000 sign-ups per month across DMV facilities with around 6.5 million current registrants. Since the program’s creation, there have been 7.7 million registrations.

In 2023, there were 2,259 transplants in the state. Of those who donated and were issued a state ID or driver's license, 75% were registered organ donors. Nevertheless, approximately 300 Illinoisans die each year waiting for a transplant, and some 4,000 people remain on the waiting list at any given time.

Additional activities this month include a statewide organ and tissue donor registration ad campaign highlighting Tonisha Daniel's story, "Blue and Green Day" on April 12 at DMVs, health fairs, donor registration drives, and visits to high school driver's education classes throughout the state to educate 15-and 16-year-olds about donation before receiving their driver's licenses.

To join the millions of Illinoisans who have already signed up, individuals can visit www.LifeGoesOn.com, complete the registration card found in the donor brochure, call 800-210-2106, or visit a DMV.

Any Illinoisan with a valid Illinois driver's license or state ID card can become a donor.