



Statewide drive aims to add 1 million names to Michigan Organ Donor Registry

Donor Drive 2010 sign-up efforts already under way across Michigan

Gift of Life Michigan and its key partners, including the MHA, have launched a massive campaign to add one million new names to the Michigan Organ Donor Registry this year in an effort to bolster the list of potential donors and save lives.

Michigan ranks 42nd nationwide in the percentage of registered drivers who have officially expressed their wish to someday become organ, eye and tissue donors.

One reason Michigan is behind: Many residents aren't aware that signing the back of a Michigan driver's license or state ID is no longer the way to sign up. Since 2007, residents add their name to the Michigan Organ Donor Registry. They can do so at www.giftoflifemichigan.org, by calling 800.482.4881 or at a Secretary of State branch.

As part of the campaign, Gift of Life Michigan - the state's organ-recovery organization - along with the Michigan Health & Hospital Association and the Michigan Eye-Bank, is challenging the state's 177 hospitals to add 100,000 names to the registry. Hospital employees are encouraged to sign up and encourage their families, friends and neighbors to do the same.

Dozens of other groups, big and small, also have committed to help with Donor Drive 2010 and many are already hosting table sign-up drives, internal challenges and Facebook campaigns to get involved.

A critical component to the effort is social media. Gift of Life's Web site home page has a feature on the right side called a widget. This Internet tool allows users to sign up on the Donor Registry, then pass the widget along to others through email, Facebook or Twitter. It also can be hosted on other Web sites by businesses, non-profits or service groups interested in joining the campaign to save and improve lives.

Adding one million names to the state's confidential database will bring Michigan in line with the national average of 39 percent. Just 24 percent of drivers here are signed up.

“If you don't have a red heart symbol on the front of your license or state ID, you aren't fully registered,” Gift of Life CEO Richard Pietroski said. “And with 3,000 people in the state waiting for a life-saving transplant, this is a matter of life or death.”