



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Consider becoming an organ donor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Every 14 minutes a new name is added to the national organ transplant waiting list. The national transplant waiting list will top 100,000 persons in 2008.

Aug. 1 is National Minority Donor Awareness Day, an annual event designed to increase awareness about the need and importance of organ, tissue, marrow, and blood donation among all minority communities. This year's theme is "Love Yourself, Take Care of Yourself." Launched in 1996 the day also focuses on how to live a healthy life and prevent organ failure.

Wendy Dixon-Flamand of the Alabama Department of Public Health's Office of Minority Health notes, "Some people in public health have organ donation in the forefront of their lives. We encourage public health employees to sign up for organ donation. I had a brother who died in a car accident. By the time he arrived at the hospital (and the ability to contact my sister-in-law for his wishes), the only organ left to donate was his corneas. His eyes made it possible for that person to see. The reality of another individual being able to continue life in a 'normal' capacity due to transplantation is phenomenal!"

Health department employee Randy Strickland of Prattville recently donated a kidney to a woman he did not know through Banner Good Samaritan Hospital Transplant Services in Phoenix, Ariz. His donation was generous in many ways because in addition to donating his kidney, he paid his own food, lodging and travel expenses.

Strickland said his reward came from helping the recipient. She is 31-years-old, African American, and a single mother of three who had been on kidney dialysis. The recipient has been ill since 2001 and was on the transplant list for slightly more than two years. With her new kidney functioning well, the young mother no longer has to undergo dialysis and is seeking employment. The underlying cause of her kidney disease was hypertension.

The campaign's goal is also to increase the number of people who sign donor cards, have discussions with their families about their wishes, and become donors. Minority Donor Awareness Day is also aimed at increasing awareness of the behaviors that may lead to the need for transplantation, such as smoking, alcohol and substance abuse, and poor nutrition.

Those considering organ donation are asked to say “yes” when obtaining or renewing their Alabama driver’s license. Drivers will be asked, “Do you wish to be an organ donor?” Those who say they will mean they will offer someone a very special gift—a second chance at life.

Ms. Dixon-Flamand explained, “‘Yes’ means you have decided to give organs and tissues after your death to people who urgently need a transplant. The title ‘Organ Donor’ and a red heart will appear on the lower right corner of your driver’s license. If you decide to become an organ donor after you have been issued your license, you can obtain an organ donor sticker to place on the license to indicate your decision. Stickers can be obtained from your local probate office.”

The urgent need for organ transplants grows daily with more than 50,000 people nationally and over 1,000 people in Alabama anxiously waiting for a donor. A choice to become an organ donor can make a life-saving difference for these critically ill people.

The information included here is available at: <http://teamalabama.wordpress.com/become-a-donor/>, or by contacting the Alabama Organ Center (AOC) about donation and transplantation toll free at 1-800-252-3677.