

Donor Awareness Council

Say Yes To Organ & Tissue Donation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation in the Spotlight Throughout the Month of April

*Colorado and Wyoming Gear Up for 'National Donate Life Month' – Thirty Days Dedicated to Raising
Awareness of Organ and Tissue Donation and
Celebrating the Gift of Life*

DENVER – March 24, 2004 – As springtime approaches, growth and new life are all around – making it an ideal time to celebrate the gift of life.

Last spring, after 20 years of marking one week each April as 'National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week,' Health and Human Services Secretary, Tommy G. Thompson deemed April 'National Donate Life Month'-- thirty days each year in which a concentrated effort is put toward raising public awareness of the critical need for organ, tissue, marrow and blood donation, as well as honoring those touched by donation. In an official proclamation, President George W. Bush also supported this move.

Last year's change to a month-long observance further supported Secretary Thompson's commitment to donation, which began with his launching of the Gift of Life Donation Initiative just 75 days after he took office, and encouraged donation and transplant organizations to invest even more than usual in public awareness activities in their communities. As a result, millions of Americans – including those throughout Colorado and Wyoming -- have the opportunity once again this April to learn about all of the ways they can help those in need of transplants and save lives.

As the second National Donate Life Month approaches, Donor Awareness Council (DAC), a non-profit coalition formed to increase organ and tissue donation through education and awareness in Colorado and Wyoming, and its 14 coalition partners are mounting a variety of initiatives to actively

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promote and support National Donate Life Month here in the region. The group wants to educate the public on organ and tissue donation, to honor the lives of those in the region touched by donation, and most importantly, encourage even more people than ever before to make the decision to sign up on the Colorado and Wyoming Organ and Tissue Donor Registries – and to share their decision with their families.

“April is a special time of year for heightened focus on and celebration of the gift of life,” said Marlene Murphy, executive director of Donor Awareness Council. “It is a time when the donation community, as a whole, can concentrate on spreading the message about organ and tissue donation, while working to dispel the myths that often prevent people from making the decision to become donors.”

While increased numbers of people are signing up to be listed on the Colorado Organ and Tissue Donor Registry through driver license offices and online at www.coloradodonorregistry.org, there are still many who think, for example, that they are too old to become donors; that their religion prohibits donation or that if they have had an illness, like cancer, they cannot become donors. “Our job is to get the facts out there so that people come to understand what donation is all about, and that anyone – regardless of age, race, gender or medical history -- can make the decision to be a donor,” Murphy explained.

In an effort to get the facts out to the community, some of the National Donate Life Month activities currently planned for April throughout the region include: promoting organ and tissue donation at a number of health fairs, blood drives, community events, hosting “donor drives” and providing speakers – often transplant recipients and/or donor families sharing their personal experiences with donation.

In addition, this year DAC is launching its new Youth Initiative – a program that will reach out to young people throughout the region to get them thinking and talking about organ and tissue donation. This new youth-focused effort will complement some of the existing youth programs of DAC’s coalition partners, including Bonfils Blood Center, which currently runs extensive programs in high schools, this year and into the future. “Young people today are altruistic and very open. Many realize that through organ and tissue donation, death doesn’t have to be the last comment on life,” said Jessica Maitland of Bonfils Blood Center.

A list of planned National Donate Life Month activities can also be found on www.donor-awareness.org

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“Many people are surprised to learn that eight lives can be saved and as many as 50 lives enhanced by just one organ and tissue donor. During National Donate Life Month, all donors and their families who have given so many others a chance at a better life are honored. We can only hope that through our efforts many more Americans will follow their example,” said Murphy.

About Donor Awareness Council

Donor Awareness Council is a non-profit coalition formed in 1989 to increase organ and tissue donation through public education and awareness in communities across Colorado and Wyoming. Its vision is to help the public understand the benefits of organ and tissue donation so that every potential transplant recipient has the opportunity for an increased quality of life.

Donor Awareness Council Coalition Partners include AlloSource; American Liver Foundation; American Transplant Association, Rocky Mountain Chapter; Black Transplants Action Committee; Centura Health – Porter Transplant Service; ClinImmune Labs; Donor Alliance; Laboratories at Bonfils/Bonfils Blood Center; National Kidney Foundation of Colorado, Idaho, Montana & Wyoming; Presbyterian St. Luke’s Medical Center; Rocky Mountain Lions Eye Bank; Statline; The Children’s Hospital and University of Colorado Hospital.

Please visit www.donor-awareness.org or call (303) 388-8605 or (888) 388-8605 to request a brochure.

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