

Lend your support to National Donate Life Month

BY RICH UMBDENSTOCK

April is National Donate Life Month, a time for everyone to consider the drastic need for more registered organ, eye and tissue donors.

Without donors, little can be done for thousands of patients whose hope lies in the generosity of others whom they may never meet. More than 117,000 people are waiting for lifesaving organ transplants in the United States. Thousands more need tissue or corneal transplants.

In 2012, more than 14,000 donors provided the gift of life to more than 28,000 transplant recipients. Even with the tremendous generosity of these donors and their families, nearly 7,000 people on the waiting list died last year because the demand continues to outpace supply.

I encourage all of you to support National Donate Life Month. It's a nationwide campaign sponsored by Donate Life America, an alliance of national organiza-

tions – including the AHA – and local coalitions dedicated to educating the public about donations. During National Donate Life Month, we celebrate those who have received or wait for lifesaving transplants, remember those who died waiting for their second chance at life, and thank those who have saved and improved lives through the gift of donation.

National Donate Life Month also is the perfect time to recognize the Workplace Partnership For Life (WPFL) Hospital Organ Donation Campaign. As partners in the campaign, hundreds of America's hospitals are committed to working toward the day when the wait list is measured in days and weeks, not months and years. They work with local organ procurement organizations within their communities or participate in statewide efforts led by their state hospital associations to promote donor awareness and enrollment activities.

The AHA is proud to be one of the 10 national partners in this ongoing effort, launched in 2011 by the Health Resources and Services Administration. As a national partner, we are sharing information and encouraging hospitals across the country to join in this important effort to help increase donor registration within their facilities and local communities. Hospitals and health systems have the unique ability to educate patients, visitors, members of the community, and their own staff and caregivers about the importance of signing up to become an organ and tissue donor.

Organ, eye and tissue donation is a critical health care issue, and every hospital



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and health system leader should be promoting the cause. You can begin through simple outreach activities to identify and communicate how people can register as donors in your state, educating your staff and displaying Donate Life and WPFL links and web banners.

Find out how you can get involved by visiting WPFL at www.organdonor.gov and Donate Life America at www.donatelife.net.

Many are doing a great job. But we can – and must – do more. Join the campaign and help save even more lives. Please give hope to those who still wait.

Umbdenstock is president and CEO of the AHA.

National Partners in the WPFL Hospital Organ Donation Campaign

AHA

Association for Multicultural Affairs in Transplantation

Association of Organ Procurement Organizations

American Society of Transplantation

American Society of Transplant Surgeons

Donate Life America

Donation and Transplantation Community of Practice

Alliance for Organ Donation and Transplantation

NATCO, The Organization for Transplant Professionals

United Network for Organ Sharing

