



**Donate Life America
National Minority Donor Awareness Day
Q & A and Talking Points
August 1, 2008**

What is National Minority Donor Awareness Day and why is it important?

- National Minority Donor Awareness Day, celebrated annually on August 1, is a nationwide observance to educate minorities of the desperate need for donation and transplantation within the multicultural community and on how to designate their decision to **Donate Life**SM. Approximately 53% of those on the national organ transplant waiting list are minorities. In 2007, 10,752 minority individuals received an organ transplant; there were 2,669 minority deceased donors and 1,851 living donors.
 - In 2007, 1,250 donors were African American and 5,459 received organ transplants.
 - In 2007, 1,141 donors were Hispanic and 3,679 received organ transplants.
 - In 2007, 180 donors were Asian and 1,227 received organ transplants.
- This is the 12th Anniversary of National Minority Donor Awareness Day. President Clinton first recognized the observance in 1996.
- The goal of National Minority Donor Awareness Day is to inspire people from all racial and ethnic groups to become donors and educate them on how to ensure their decision to donate will be honored.

Why is it important for Minorities to become donors?

- Ethnic minorities are facing a public health crisis and are in desperate need of more organ and tissue donors.
- There are more than 50,000 minority individuals [This number includes, African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders and people of multiracial descent] registered on the U.S. transplant waiting list.
- Minorities comprise 53% of individuals on the national organ transplant waiting list and they represent 26% of living and deceased organ donors. Minorities make up 20% of the U.S. population.
- Many of the conditions leading to the need for a transplant - such as diabetes and hypertension- occur with greater frequency among minority populations.

- Tragically, every 11 minutes another patient is added to the waiting list and 18 people die each day due to lack of organ donors.

What prevents some minorities from becoming organ donors?

- Many African Americans do not have organ and tissue donation on their “radar”—it’s simply not at the top of their mind.
- Most are not aware of the large number of minorities who are waiting for transplants.
- There is a perception that minorities do not have equal access to organ transplants.
- Some people in minority communities are afraid that they will not receive the best medical treatment in a life-threatening emergency if they were a known “organ donor.” Often there is a mistrust of medical establishments and institutions.
- They are reluctant to sign any formal documents that commit them to this decision.

Does the church support organ and tissue donation?

- Every major religion in the United States supports organ, eye and tissue donation as one of the highest expressions of compassion and generosity.

Is there a need for any particular organ among minorities?

- Yes. Kidneys are at the top of the list. While 20% of the US population is of minority ethnicity, approximately 61% [This percentage includes, African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders and people of multiracial decent] of those waiting for kidney transplants are minorities.
- Currently, more than 46,000 minority individuals are waiting for kidney transplants. For these patients, the lack of available organs means longer waiting periods on transplant lists, more time spent on dialysis, and sometimes death.

Why is the need for kidneys so high among minorities?

- Minorities are disproportionately affected by illnesses that can lead to end-stage renal disease and the need for dialysis or a kidney transplant. These diseases include high blood pressure and diabetes.

How much does it cost to be a donor?

- There is no cost to the donor's family or estate.

How can I become an organ and tissue donor?

The most important step is to sign up to be a donor according to the laws of your state. The laws that govern organ and tissue donation vary from state to state. To find out what the laws in your state, visit www.donatelife.net.

In California, you may sign up to be a donor at the DMV or online at www.donateLIFEcalifornia.org or www.doneVIDAcalifornia.org.

- Always remember, it is important to tell your family members that you have decided to become a donor so that they will understand your decision and support it.

Is it true that rich people and celebrities get preferential treatment when it comes to organ and tissue transplantation?

- No. When you are on the transplant waiting list for a donor organ, what really counts is the severity of your illness, time spent waiting, blood type and other important medical information.
- One's celebrity status does not play a part in the decision at all. Once you are qualified for transplantation, you are put on the organ transplant waiting list. The list is "blind" to ethnicity, gender, connections and wealth.
- When a celebrity needs an organ, it tends to get more attention from the media, so it may seem like they are getting special consideration. However, they have been placed on the waiting list like everyone else.

Are there any benefits to being an organ, eye and tissue donor?

- The benefits are intangible--- knowing that you may give someone else another chance to live a healthy, productive life.
- In addition, a single donor can save or improve the lives of up to 50 people; the gift of life is one of the most important gifts you can give.
- It can also be a consolation to your family to know you have helped to save and/or enhance lives.

What is being done to increase the number of minority donors?

- Donate Life America created radio, television and print public service announcements to educate this public health crisis and urge more minorities to become organ and tissue donors.
- Also other initiatives spearheaded by member organizations are taking place throughout the nation such as:
 - Visiting and informing houses of worship about the need for donors
 - Youth education and school programs
 - Presentations for civic organizations

What can I do to increase organ and tissue donation in my community?

- Tell family and friends about your decision to donate life, ask them to get the facts, and consider registering as a donor.
- Go to www.donatelife.net for tips and tools for educating members of your community about the life saving gift of organ eye and tissue donation. These may include:
 - Placing articles in newsletters
 - Hanging posters around the community
 - Handing out brochures
 - Including flyers in church bulletins
 - Using donatelife.net web banners on your personal or organizational website.
 - Wearing Donate Life Pins

What is Donate Life America and how are they funded?

- Founded in 1992, Donate Life America's mission is to serve as a national voice and inspire all people to save and enhance lives through organ, eye and tissue donation.
- Donate Life America is a 501 c (e) not for profit organization funded through contributions from the public and member agencies whose vision is an organ, eye or tissue transplant for everyone in need.