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Saratoga County Clerk Craig Hayner announces start of Donate Life Month *Annual initiative aims to encourage organ donation enrollment*

BALLSTON SPA – Saratoga County Clerk Craig A. Hayner today announced the kickoff of a month-long initiative to encourage residents to register as organ donors when they visit any of the three Saratoga County Department of Motor Vehicles locations.

The Saratoga County DMV is teaming up with Donate Life New York State in observance of National Donate Life Month, celebrating the lifesaving impact made by organ, eye, and tissue donors.

Donate Life NYS is the statewide nonprofit organization whose mission is to increase organ, eye and tissue donation in New York State through collaborative advocacy, education, research, and promotion.

"We are proud to support Donate Life New York State in its mission to continue to grow the organ donor database," Hayner said. "While thousands of lives are saved each year through organ donation, thousands more remain on the waitlist. That's why we take the DMV's role in increasing enrollment very seriously."

While more than 3,500 lifesaving organ transplants were performed in state last year, nearly 8,000 New Yorkers remain on the national organ transplant waitlist. In 2023, approximately 400 patients awaiting an organ transplant in New York State died because the organ needed to save their lives was not donated in time.

The theme of 2024's Donate Life Month, "Donors Are SuperStars!" takes its inspiration from the nighttime sky and was chosen because stars remind us that even in the darkest night, there is light.

"During April — and every month — the Saratoga County DMV offers visitors the opportunity to be 'superstars' by enrolling in the New York State Donate Life Registry when conducting a license, permit, or non-driver ID transaction," Hayner said.

As part of the local effort, the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors earlier this month unanimously passed a resolution recognizing April as Donate Life Month, encouraging staff members of Saratoga County departments and agencies to participate in the Donate Life's "Blue and Green Day," which is April 12.

Saratoga County's enrollment has increased steadily in the years since the County DMV began promoting Donate Life Month in 2014. According to the most recent statistics from Donate Life NYS, at the end of 2023, 71% of the eligible population in Saratoga County was enrolled in the registry. This

reflects a steady uptick in donor registry enrollment in Saratoga County, rising from 39% in 2013 to about 54% in 2018 and over 61% in 2020.

“The rise in organ donor enrollments in Saratoga County over the past several years is quite remarkable,” Hayner said. “But there is still more work to be done to ensure all those who need life-saving organ donations get them.”

Statewide, 83% of donors sign up while completing a transaction at a DMV. According to Donate Life NYS Executive Director Aisha Tator, DMVs throughout the state have already helped nearly 6 million New Yorkers enroll in the New York State Donate Life Registry. “By providing the opportunity for the public to enroll in the NYS Donate Life Registry, they are the key to saving and healing the lives of the thousands of New Yorkers in need of a transplant,” Tator said.

All New Yorkers aged 16 and older can enroll in the New York State Donor Registry, regardless of their medical history. The enrollment option is available on forms used to apply for or renew a driver’s license or non-driver identification card. New Yorkers can also enroll in the registry while applying for health insurance through the New York State of Health and on voter registration forms. In addition, online enrollment is available at any time at donatelife.ny.gov/register.

Additionally, New Yorkers can show their support for organ and tissue donation by purchasing a “Life-Pass It On” custom license plate from the DMV or making a voluntary \$1 contribution to organ transplant research, education and donation promotion projects by checking off the box when applying for or renewing their driver license, learner permit, or non-driver ID.

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