

## Campaign makes push for organ donations

By [Tory N. Parrish](#)

**Published:** Saturday, May 18, 2013, 9:00 p.m.  
*Updated 15 hours ago*

Ron Gooden, 56, considers his birthday to be Nov. 22, 2011.

That's the day the Hampton resident received a heart transplant.

"I just thank God every day for the donor family's decision — unselfish decision — to make this donation, because without that, I would not be here today," Gooden said.

Gooden speaks in a video about the impact of transplants as part of Donate Life Pennsylvania's new campaign, "30 Seconds," which aims to increase the number of people designating themselves as organ donors on their driver's licenses or other state identification.

In Pennsylvania, 46 percent of licensed drivers and other state identification holders — or 4.4 million people — are designated organ and tissue donors, putting the state 33rd of 50 states, according to John Green, spokesman at Gift of Life Donor Program, an organ procurement organization in Philadelphia.

The campaign's goal is to add 200,000 more donors in two years.

The campaign includes six 30-second videos featuring organ recipients and those waiting for an organ.

The videos are on [www.donatelifepa.org](http://www.donatelifepa.org) and are being shown on video monitors at 20 driver's license centers across the state, said Robert Johnson, spokesman for Donate Life Pennsylvania. Print materials will be published in magazines and online and placed on trains and at community events and driver's license centers, according to the organization.

Nationwide, 18 people die each day while waiting for a transplant, said Misty Enos, associate director of community outreach at the Center for Organ Recovery & Education, or CORE, an organ procurement organization in O'Hara.

One challenge is to dispel myths about donations, she said, among them being that doctors won't work hard to save the life of an ill donor and that the donor or his or her estate pays the cost of harvesting the organ.

"And that's one of the big reasons why we have this Donate Life PA campaign is to educate the public," Enos said.

In 1996, Gooden was diagnosed with cardiomyopathy, which enlarges and weakens the heart. His health started to decline in the late 1990s, and he went on a waiting list for a heart transplant in 2011, he said.

Getting a new heart meant that he witnessed his son's and daughter's college graduations last year and walked his daughter down the aisle at her wedding this month and got married himself last June.

"That's why I think it's just so important that people understand just the type of gift that they can leave someone," said Gooden, a Hampton High School assistant football coach.

North Catholic sophomore Antonela Kasic, 16, is a cheerleader who needs a small bowel transplant, she said. She moved with her parents from Croatia to Pittsburgh for medical care when she was 3.

At 5 foot 6 inches and 103 pounds, the Morningside resident takes an intravenous nutritional supplement five days a week while she is sleeping, she said. The treatment can cause liver failure.

She summed up the importance of organ donation in her "30 Seconds" video.

"Totally click the sign-up button because you can save my life maybe. You can save some other kid's that's waiting for one. You can save somebody's mom," she said.

Tory N. Parrish is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. She can be reached at 412-380-5662 or [tparrish@tribweb.com](mailto:tparrish@tribweb.com).

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