

Office of East Haven Mayor Encourages Organ and Tissue Donation During National Hispanic Heritage Month

East Haven, Connecticut], September 22 – National Hispanic Heritage Month, celebrated September 15 – October 15, pays tribute to the positive influence that Hispanic Americans have had on our nation and society. In observance of National Hispanic Heritage Month, the Donate Life community highlights the critical need for lifesaving transplants within this and all communities and encourages the public to register to donate.

Every day, the lives of hundreds are forever changed when they are told that only a transplant will save or restore their lives. This fate is disproportionately higher in minority communities who are three times more likely than Caucasians to suffer from end stage renal disease and diabetes. Hispanic American and East Haven resident, Carlos Sanchez was given this diagnosis over five years ago. As a type 1 diabetic, Sanchez experienced kidney failure and required exhaustive daily dialysis treatments to live while on the transplant waiting list. One day on a whim, Sanchez put a message on Facebook asking if anyone would be willing to save his life by parting with one of their kidneys.

Never thinking he would get a response, he got a few! One response was from East Haven's own mayor, Mayor April Capone Almon. Rigorous testing at Yale-New Haven Transplant Program determined that Mayor Capone Almon was a perfect match for Sanchez. On the morning of April 8, 2010 the pair went into surgery. Less than 24 hours later, Carlos came *walking* into the Mayor's recovery room with flowers. "I couldn't believe it," Mayor Capone Almon said, "he was so ill the day before and here he was walking around with renewed energy and zest for life!"

Mayor Capone Almon and Sanchez support the mission of Donate Life Connecticut, the state-wide non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the importance of organ and tissue donation. The pair shares their experience and encourage others to register as organ and tissue donors at the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles or online at www.DonateLifeNewEngland.org.

Not every person waiting for a kidney transplant finds a living donor match. Those who don't, rely on the generosity of strangers who register to be organ and tissue donors. "One donor can save and improve the lives of over 50 others through their decision to donate," states Kari Mull, Program Manager for Donate Life Connecticut.

Today, hundreds of men, women and children in the United States are in need of organ and tissue transplants to restore them to life, mobility and health. Of those, more than 108,000 people, 18,894 of whom are Hispanic, await life-saving organ transplants. Unless more donors register, the number of Hispanics, and people of all races and ethnicities, on the waiting list will continue to grow. Making the decision to become an organ and tissue donor will provide hope to the thousands who still wait.

Registering to become a donor takes 5 minutes. Visit www.DonateLifeNewEngland.org to register today.

About Donate Life Connecticut

Donate Life Connecticut is a statewide collaborative volunteer organization consisting of healthcare organizations and passionate individuals. Together, through education and awareness programs, the organization publicly promotes the importance of organ and tissue donation.