

For Immediate Release:  
April 23, 2010

## Media Release

### York Central Hospital Encourages Organ and Tissue Donor Registration to Help Save Lives

**Richmond Hill, ON** – York Central Hospital would like to remind all residents of York Region they have an opportunity to register as an organ and tissue donor and help save lives. There are 1,600 people on the waiting list for life saving organ and tissue transplants in Ontario and only 17 per cent of Ontarians with health cards are registered as donors. As we observe National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, we encourage all Ontarians to register today and help save lives.

In 2009, nearly 700 lives were saved in Ontario due to a record number of organ donors who gave the gift of life by donating their organs and/or tissue. This represents a 17 per cent increase from 2008. However, many more people are still waiting. Many will spend months, in some cases years, waiting for a second chance because the need for organs and tissue in Ontario continues to outweigh their availability. Far too often, lives are lost because suitable donors are not found in time.

“I’ve been on the transplant list for two years waiting for a liver so I can tell you from personal experience how important it is for everyone to register as a donor and increase the number of life saving organ and tissue transplants,” says Arlene Ramdeen, Registered Dietitian at York Central Hospital. “Many people are not aware they can also be a live liver donor as only a piece of the liver is needed and this organ can regenerate itself in both the recipient and the donor. It only takes a few minutes of your time to register and have an important conversation with your family about your decision to give life. This one conversation can make all the difference for the future and for many individuals like myself waiting for a transplant and a second chance at life.”

#### Supporting Organ and Tissue Donation

York Central Hospital is supporting National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week in a variety of ways:

- We’ve encouraged all of our staff, physicians and volunteers to register as a donor with Trillium Gift of Life Network;
- There is a message of support and a link to the Trillium Gift of Life on-line registration page on York Central Hospital’s home page;
- The Gift of Life flag is on our hospital flag pole in support of organ donation awareness; and
- We are hosting staff and physician education activities during the next two weeks to help raise awareness about the importance of organ and tissue donation.

“Organ and tissue donations are crucial to saving the lives of many people across the province each year,” says Dr. Hy Dwosh, member of Trillium Gift of Life Integrated Stakeholder Advisory Council. “We often have patients who would be perfect candidates for donation, however families are unsure of their loved ones wishes and this makes the decision to donate very stressful. Talk to your family about your wishes. If something should happen to you, they will appreciate knowing how you feel about donation.”

York Central Hospital has a robust organ donation program in place. There is a strong commitment to ensuring appropriate patients and families have the information available to them regarding the opportunity to donate organs and tissues. Ultimately the decision is a personal one that must be made by the patient and or family. We ensure the option is presented and if there is interest, we connect the patient or family with the Gift of Life network. As a result of that, we've increased our donor rates by 50 per cent in the last year. We've also increased our referral rate of appropriate candidates from 94 to 100 per cent. These numbers are incredibly significant when a single organ and tissue donor can save up to eight lives and enhance as many as 75 others. York Central Hospital has an active organ and tissue donation committee and a number of champions on staff.

You can register your consent by going to [www.yorkcentral.on.ca](http://www.yorkcentral.on.ca) and click on the button "Save a Life. Register Yes."

### **Organ Donation:**

Organ transplantation has evolved from an experimental treatment to the treatment of choice for thousands of Ontarians who await the gift of life. Unfortunately the supply of solid organs for transplantation has not met the demand and has remained relatively unchanged over the past decade.

### **Tissue Donation:**

Every year, more than 2,000 people in Ontario have their lives enhanced or saved through transplantation of donated tissue. These are people who can see again thanks to cornea transplants, whose heart function is improved with valve transplants, who can get around on their own, their mobility restored by bone grafts, or those for whom skin grafts speed recovery from burns or accidents.

### **Why consider a donation?**

- Everyone is a potential organ and tissue donor, regardless of their age. To date, the oldest Canadian organ donor was over 90 years of age while the oldest tissue donor was 102 years old.
- Recovery of organs and tissue is carried out with respect and dignity. It does not interfere with funeral practices and no one will know about your gift of life unless your family tells them.
- Organs and tissue that can be donated after death include the heart, liver, kidneys, pancreas, lungs, small bowel, stomach, corneas, heart valves, bone and skin.
- Live donors can be used for liver and kidney transplants.
- Studies show that donating the organs and tissue of a loved one who has died can provide immediate comfort and long-lasting consolation to family members in their grieving.

For further information on organ and tissue donation, please see: [www.giftoflife.on.ca](http://www.giftoflife.on.ca).

### **About York Central Hospital**

[www.yorkcentral.on.ca](http://www.yorkcentral.on.ca) - Opened in 1963, York Central Hospital is a large community hospital (472 beds) located in Richmond Hill providing Emergency, Inpatient, Ambulatory, Continuing and Long-Term Care services to a community of over 500,000 residents in Southwest York Region. Last summer the hospital completed Phase One of its major expansion and renovation project, significantly expanding its treatment facilities and inpatient beds. In addition to the services it provides locally, York Central Hospital is the District Stroke Centre for York Region and is home to a number of regional services including: the York Region Chronic Kidney Disease Program, York Region Domestic Assault and Sexual Assault Care Centre, and the York/Simcoe Behaviour Management and Autism Programs.

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