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**FLORIDA'S AGENCY FOR HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATION LAUNCHES THE
JOSHUA ABBOTT ORGAN AND TISSUE DONOR REGISTRY**
~Floridians can now become organ, tissue and eye donors online~

TALLAHASSEE – Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration (Agency) today announced the launch of the Joshua Abbott Organ and Tissue Donor Registry. Florida's new, online organ, tissue and eye donor registry is named in memory of lung transplant recipient and donation advocate Joshua Abbott, who passed away in 2006. This registry will allow Floridians to become organ, tissue and eye donors online at www.DonateLifeFlorida.org.

Prior to the new online registry, Floridians could only register as organ and/or tissue donors by completing paperwork at their local driver license office. The new organ and tissue donor registry will add an option which allows citizens to designate themselves as organ, tissue and eye donors online. Registered donors will be able to update their wishes on the secure Web site with their user name and password.

"Organ donors save lives, and this new system will make it easier for all of us to make a difference," said Agency for Health Care Administration Secretary Holly Benson. "We hope that by putting the registry online we will encourage more Floridians to become donors and give the gift of life."

The online registry also makes the exact wishes of registered donors more accessible and up-to-date for organ, tissue and eye recovery organizations. When someone dies, these organizations will be able to quickly determine, online, whether that individual is a potential organ, tissue or eye donor. They then carry out the donor's wishes, providing life-saving and life-enhancing gifts to patients in need of an organ, tissue or eye transplant.

"There are more than 3,600 patients waiting for an organ or tissue donation in Florida," said Kathy Giery, chairwoman of Donate Life Florida. "The online registry will help organ recovery organizations identify potential donors more efficiently in order to save more lives."

Florida's Joshua Abbott Organ and Tissue Registry was created by Senate Bill 2630 which was signed by Governor Charlie Crist in 2008. Sponsors of the legislation included Senators Don Gaetz, Evelyn Lynn and Steve Oelrich and Representatives Alan Hays and Ed Homan.



“It is exciting to witness the launch of Florida’s Joshua Abbott Organ and Tissue Donor Registry,” said Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives Larry Cretul. “By increasing the awareness and accessibility of the donation process through the online registry, we will be able to save more lives.”

With the help of the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (Department), Florida’s current donors are already uploaded into the new, online registry. Floridians who are already donors are encouraged to visit the Web site and update their donor profile and ensure their wishes are noted.

“The Department, working in conjunction with numerous tax collectors, has helped register the nearly five million organ donors currently identified in our system. Every person registered means a potential life saved, and we are proud to play an integral role in the process,” said Executive Director Electra Theodorides-Bustle. “The online registry is a great example of agencies working together and using technology to better meet the needs of today’s customer.”

The Agency has partnered with the statewide non-profit organization, Donate Life Florida, to oversee the registry and to educate Floridians about organ, tissue and eye donation. Donate Life Florida is dedicated to empowering the public to save and enhance lives through organ and tissue donation as well as make other lifesaving donations, such as blood and marrow. Funding for the registry comes solely from voluntary contributions to the HealthCare Trust Fund through the one-dollar donation Floridians make when obtaining motorist services.

The Agency for Health Care Administration is committed to better health care for all Floridians. The Agency administers Florida’s Medicaid program, licenses and regulates more than 32,000 health care facilities and 37 health maintenance organizations, and publishes health care data and statistics. For more information, please visit <http://ahca.myflorida.com>.

Donate Life Florida is a non-profit 501(C)3 organization dedicated to motivating Floridians to designate themselves as organ, tissue and eye donors, so lives are saved and enhanced through donation and transplantation. For more information, visit www.donatelifeflorida.org.

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