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## Licking County Health Department

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Date: April 12, 2011

To: All Local Media

Subject: April is National Donate Life Month

In 2003, what had been known as National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week became a full month observance. The Licking County Health Department would like to support the outreach efforts of Lifeline of Ohio in reminding citizens of this important program. "There is no greater gift than the "Gift of Life," stated Joe Ebel, Licking County Health Commissioner.

According to Lifeline, approximately 28,000 Americans received a life-saving organ transplant last year. However, there are more than 110,000 men, women and children waiting to get a second chance at life. "If we don't do something about it, that list will continue to grow," said Nancy Hanger, Nursing Director at the Licking County Health Department. One individual's decision to be a donor can save eight lives through organ donation and heal up to 50 more through tissue and eye donation. Organs that can be donated include heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, small intestine and pancreas. Tissues include heart valves, bones, tendons, ligaments, fascia, veins, skin, nerves and corneas.

Though the need is great, some people choose not to donate because of common myths and misconceptions about organ and tissue donation. Many believe it is against their religion; however, all major religions support this vital program. Others believe they would not receive good medical care if it is revealed they are an organ donor. The simple fact is doctors are concerned with saving the lives before them, not about who has the potential to be an organ donor. Another concern for donors is the fact that they may have a chronic illness such as diabetes or heart disease and feel they can't donate because of this issue. The program design includes a physician evaluation of each potential donor for specific organs and tissues which may be donor healthy. Finally, some people assume it costs money to become an organ or tissue donor. The truth is there are no costs to a donor's family or their estate for being an organ and tissue donor.

To become an organ and tissue donor, you may register at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) when you renew your driver's license or at [www.ohiobmv.com](http://www.ohiobmv.com). Recent statistics indicate 56% of Licking County residents have made a commitment to donate through their BMV registration. Registration can also be done through Lifeline's website [www.lifelineofohio.org](http://www.lifelineofohio.org) or by calling 1-800-525-5667.

Be proactive. Make this important decision to donate your organs and tissues now. You really can make a significant difference whether you are 17 or 70 years of age. For additional information, contact Nancy Hanger at the Licking County Health Department at 740-349-6535.