

Media Release



TRILLIUM GIFT OF LIFE NETWORK LAUNCHES FIRST CAMPUS CAMPAIGN URGING POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS TO CONSIDER ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

*Provocative RecycleMe.org campaign hits college and university campuses,
engaging students in a life-size game of 'Operation'*

TORONTO, ON – September 22, 2009 – Trillium Gift of Life Network (TGLN) took another bold step today with the launch of their first campus tour– the second phase of its provocative RecycleMe.org campaign. Geared at reaching college and university students, TGLN is touring Southern Ontario campuses with a life-size game of *Operation*, with the aim of raising youth awareness about the critical need for organ and tissue donors. The tour officially kicks off today at Centennial College in Toronto and will visit several campuses over a two-week period.

“Universities and colleges are where students form their ideas and opinions about the world and the impact they want to have in it – we want to put organ and tissue donation on their radar and this is a powerful way to do that,” said Frank Markel, President and CEO of TGLN. “At this time approximately 63% of eligible Ontario residents have recorded some organ donor decision on the database. Currently, approximately 17% have recorded an affirmative organ donor decision. We want to encourage youth to take the lead on this issue by encouraging their peers, parents and grandparents to register their consent to donate organs and tissue.”

The highlight of the campus tour is a life-sized version of the classic board game *Operation*, which students will have the opportunity to play to win prizes. Computer kiosks will feature the RecycleMe.org website and TGLN representatives will be on-hand to provide informational materials, answer questions and accept completed organ and tissue donor consent forms which can be dropped off in a secure 'RecycleMe.org recycling box'.

“Children grow up marveling at the idea of saving lives and often imagine doing just that by playing games like *Operation*,” said Markel. “As they get older and grow into adults, many of them don’t realize that they do have the power to save lives - it just takes a few minutes to register to become an organ and tissue donor. That’s what this campaign is really all about; the power that each and every one of our youth has to save lives.”

Aaron Kucharczuk, a 24-year-old student from the University of Toronto, was one of several youth panelists who helped inform the campaign. “The problem is that organ and tissue donation just isn’t on our radar the way that more well-known causes are,” said Kucharczuk. “By taking this campaign directly to campuses, we hope to inspire a new generation of youth to understand the power and importance of organ and tissue donation.”

The RecycleMe.org campaign, launched in April this year, asks youth to show their support and ‘join the movement’ online. To develop the campaign, TGLN created and worked with a youth advisory panel over a period of six months to ensure its messages would speak to the intended audience.

Since the site launched in late April, almost 5,000 Ontarians have expressed their support for organ and tissue donation by 'joining the movement' at RecycleMe.org and there have been over 170,000 unique visitors to the site. The site itself presents a wealth of information about organ and tissue donation using a bold and graphic approach.

The campus tour will continue to drive youth to its online hub. RecycleMe.org includes inspirational personal stories from Ontarians who have been touched by this issue, raw video footage featuring actual transplants, and a discussion forum. The site gives youth the chance to 'join the movement' and pledge their support for organ and tissue donation.

"I'm very pleased with the success of the RecycleMe.org program so far and am excited about its next phase," said David Caplan, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. "Building awareness and education of organ and tissue donation – especially among our youth – will help to increase donor rates in Ontario."

The RecycleMe.org campaign is part of the Ontario Government's provincial Organ and Tissue Donation Strategy. Designed to build awareness about the need for organ and tissue donors, the strategy will continue to roll out over the next two years.

About RecycleMe.org:

- Over 170,000 unique visitors to the site since launch
- Over 19,000 consent registration form downloads from the Trillium Gift of Life Network website since campaign launch, with 6,356 of those coming directly from the RecycleMe.org website. This translates into a phenomenal increase of over 400% vs. the same period a year ago
- Almost 5,000 Ontarians have expressed their support for OTD by 'joining the movement' on the website
- Spawned an amazing and engaged fan base on the Facebook RecycleMe.org page, with just under 3,000 fans who continue to amass and discuss posts relating to the topic
- 90 per cent of RecycleMe.org visitors polled believed that a patient's donation wishes should be carried out
- When asked what factors they would need to consider in order to become a donor, RecycleMe.org visitors responded:
 - 67 per cent said they simply would become a donor,
 - 19 per cent wanted more information, and
 - 13 per cent needed to consider their religious views.

Today in Ontario, nearly 1700 patients are on the waiting list for organs and thousands more are waiting for tissue. Facts about organ and tissue donation in Ontario:

- Every 3 days someone dies waiting for an organ transplant.
- One organ donor can save up to 8 lives and enhance the lives of up to 75 others through tissue donation.
- Everyone is a potential organ and tissue donor, regardless of his/her age. To date, the oldest Canadian organ donor was over 90 years of age while the oldest tissue donor was 102 years old.
- The organs and tissue that can be donated include: heart, liver, kidneys, pancreas, lungs, small bowel, corneas, heart valves, bone and skin.
- Most major religions support organ and tissue donation.
- Organ and tissue donation does not affect funeral services and you can still have an open casket.

About Trillium Gift of Life Network

Trillium Gift of Life Network is a not-for-profit agency of the Government of Ontario and is responsible for planning, promoting, coordinating and supporting organ and tissue donation across Ontario and improving the system so that more lives can be saved.

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