



Niagara County
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NIAGARA COUNTY LEADS BY EXAMPLE ON ORGAN DONOR REGISTRY: JASTRZEMSKI, UPDEGROVE, COMMUNITY LEADERS SIGN UP TO DONATE

LOCKPORT—Surrounded by roughly two-dozen county leaders that agreed to be organ donors, Niagara County Clerk Joseph A. Jastrzemski added his name to the New York State Donate Life Registry at the Lockport Department of Motor Vehicles today.

Joining Jastrzemski were a collection of county government department heads and other top leaders, as well as new County Manager Richard E. Updegrove and county lawmakers Tony Nemi, R-Lockport, and Richard L. Andres, R-North Tonawanda. All were on-hand to ensure they, too, were listed in the state donor registry.

The group had assembled at the DMV because Jastrzemski spent the past weekend reaching out to local elected and appointed officials, asking them to "lead by example" and help reverse New York State's second-worst-in-the-nation organ donor status. Jastrzemski, who heads up the county's motor vehicle departments, said information provided to him by Upstate New York Transplant Services and the New York State Association of Counties that showed just 18 percent of New Yorkers had joined the registry convinced him that leadership is needed on the issue.

"When New York is second-from-the-bottom, nationally, in donors, yet the third-highest in terms of need for organs, that's a problem," Jastrzemski said. "Here in Niagara county, we have a much higher participation rate, approaching 40 percent, but we can still do better, and should be a leader in New York state."

Jastrzemski noted that every year, the county's three DMV sites, which fall under the County Clerk's Office, process 175,000 transactions.

"If we can just capture a small percentage of those transactions to also sign up for the registry, we'd be making great strides," Jastrzemski said after signing his own paperwork that adds his name to the donor registry.

Jastrzemski noted that motorists coming in to renew their driver licenses that elect to join the donor database have a "heart" symbol added to the front of their license, identifying them as a donor.

"It's important that donors are identified quickly, so that organs can reach people who desperately need them," Jastrzemski said.

Jastrzemski was joined by Jeremy Morlock, the manager of community engagement for Upstate New York Transplant Services, who provided additional statistics.

According to Morlock, more than 121,000 individuals are currently awaiting transplants across the nation, with 10 percent of them in New York.

"Sadly, an average of 22 people die each day because an organ was not made available for transplant," Morlock stated in an information handout. "A single donor can save or enhance the lives of up to 50 people."

"We're asking our neighbors to join us and help save lives," Jastrzemski said.

