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Contact:
Dan Reynolds
Director of Communications
(734) 780-2609
Fax: (734) 780-2142
dan@illinoiseyebank.org

Plainfield girl participates in statewide donation awareness campaign

PLAINFIELD – Last year, 5-year-old Plainfield resident Catherine Jenks underwent a bilateral cornea transplant, giving her a second chance for sight, thanks to the generosity of eye donors and their families. This year, she’s helping encourage others to consider signing up on the Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry.

Catherine, along with four other pediatric cornea recipients, is featured on a new poster with Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White, part of campaign aimed at increasing public awareness about the need for eye donation.

“The Secretary of State has made eye, organ and tissue donation awareness a priority of his office,” says Diane Hollingsworth, Executive Director of the Illinois Eye-Bank. “We are honored to have our young transplant recipients take part in this poster project. Receiving sight-restoring cornea transplants during childhood will dramatically increase their chances for lifetime success. Seeing children who’ve benefitted from the gift of sight reminds everyone of the value of donation.”

The posters are being introduced just in time for National Eye Donor Month, which has been recognized every March since 1983. Last year alone, more than 1,000 Illinois residents, like Catherine, received a second chance for sight through cornea transplants.

The posters will be distributed to local hospitals, schools, libraries and driving facilities throughout the state. To sign up on the Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry, visit www.lifegoeson.com. To request copies of the poster, contact Mary Schlereth at mschlereth@illinoiseyebank.org or (312) 706-6771.

The Illinois Eye-Bank is a charitable, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the restoration of sight. It recovers, evaluates and distributes human eye tissue for transplantation. It also supports research into the causes and cures of blinding eye conditions, promotes donation awareness through public and professional education, and provides humanitarian aid to people in need of corneal transplantation throughout the world. For more information, visit the Illinois Eye-Bank online at www.illinoiseyebank.org or call (800) 548-4703.

