

NEW DRIVERS

SIGNING UP TO BECOME AN ORGAN DONOR

ERNIE BERTOTHY: Welcome to DMV Infocast, an audio production of the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles. This is Ernie Bertothy, Infocast Editor.

With us today is **Nancy Dumais**, the Division Manager who oversees the agency's organ donation sign-up program. The DMV offers Connecticut residents the opportunity to become an organ donor and Nancy is here to discuss the topic.

ERNIE BERTOTHY: Well, Nancy, thank you very much for joining us today. And this topic is nothing new to the Department of Motor Vehicles, is it? This is something we started a while back.

NANCY DUMAIS: Absolutely, Ernie. The Department got involved with organ donation in the 1970s. At that time, our customer would visit our branch office, declare that they wanted to participate in the organ donation program, sign up, and we would include that in their license or identification information.

ERNIE: And now in 2006, Nancy, the process has gotten much easier, hasn't it?

NANCY: Absolutely. Certainly, you still have the avenue of walking to a branch office and participating in the program, but now I'm proud to announce that Connecticut was the first in New England to allow an avenue where you can participate in organ donation through the mail. You simply fill out our change of address card, send it back, and you will receive a red heart to place on your license, which indicates your participation in the organ donation program.

ERNIE: And Nancy, can just anyone sign up to become an organ donor? What exactly is the criteria to become an organ donor?

NANCY: Anyone in generally good health can participate in the organ donation program. And important piece that I'd like to bring out is that you can be a minor and participate in the program. There's a misconception regarding the age requirement. And as long

as you have parental consent, you would be allowed to participate. For in-depth information, I would advise you to visit our website, which has a question and answer sheet that I think that individuals would find helpful.

ERNIE: Just to clear up perhaps another misconception, Nancy, do you have to have a driver's license to become an organ donor?

NANCY: No, Ernie, you don't. That's a good point. You can have an identification card and still participate in the program.

ERNIE: And what about any costs? Does it cost any extra money if I wanted to sign up to become an organ donor?

NANCY: No. Absolutely not. Whether you enter one of our branches to participate in the program or you decide to use the new mail-in option, there is no cost to the customer.

ERNIE: And Nancy, besides convenience in the process to become an organ donor, is there anything else that the Department is doing to encourage participation?

NANCY: Absolutely. We have pamphlets and posters in the branches to educate the public. We also have the organ coalition, participate in educational programs internally to better educate our staff with the necessity for organ donation.

ERNIE: Not only are we working with the public to sign up people, we also do things behind the scenes with the organ coalitions to help them with their cause. Can you just talk about what we're doing with the organ coalitions?

NANCY: Sure. In the '70s, when this program first began, the only way we could disseminate their information is through the mail. Now we've developed an electronic process where the information is much more quickly received, thereby more usable for the organ coalitions. We also give them statistical information that shows that on average we have approximately 1,000 individuals signing up for the program each and every month.

ERNIE: And that's interesting, Nancy, that we actually have about a 1,000 per month that we're adding onto our list. Can you talk about the bigger figure of how many people are actually getting involved in this program nowadays?

NANCY: Sure. Absolutely. Out of approximately three million license and identification holders, we have approximately 900,000 individuals participating in this program.

ERNIE BERTOTHY: That's actually good news considering there are about 90,000 people on the waiting list here in the United States that are looking for organ or tissue donations.

Well, Nancy, thank you very much for joining with us today and talking about this worthwhile cause.

NANCY DUMAIS: Thank you, Ernie. It's been my pleasure.

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