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During Hispanic Heritage Month let's save Christopher's life and more lives like his

Chicago, Illinois (NED).— "Hispanic Heritage Month" is celebrated in the United States from September 15 to October 15. During this time, Americans commemorate and celebrate the contributions of Latin Americans in the United States.

From the creation of Instabook to the invention of the color TV, the contributions of the Hispanic community have helped forge the path for a brighter future – a future that, unfortunately, some will never see without an organ, eye or tissue transplant that can save or improve their lives.

Registering as an organ donor through the state's donor registry is a contribution every Hispanic American can make that will positively affect thousands of lives.

This is precisely the contribution that Maria Raymundo, mother of 7-month-old Christopher who has practically lived in the hospital since his birth, asks for. "I can't carry him because he has fractures in his legs, arms and wrists. Even when his diaper is changed, the child cries," recounts Raymundo.

Raymundo describes her daily odyssey with a baby that suffers from dextrocardia, a condition where the heart is on the right side of the body instead of left. His dysfunctional liver delays his wounds and fractures from healing. Christopher has been added on the waiting list awaiting a liver needed to save his life.

"Unfortunately, this is the situation for many Latino children," says Raiza Mendoza, public relations and Latino community outreach coordinator for Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network. "During this commemoration of Latino pride, it's good to remind the audience that part of the success of saving lives through organ donation is compatibility, and this is more easily accomplished when Latinos donate to other Latinos."

Nationally, of 115,000 men, women, and children that need transplants, 21,000 are Latinos and 800 live in Illinois. "Perhaps they are even in the same neighborhood as us and are going through what Maria and her husband Jose are experiencing, seeing their baby dependent on tubes, without having his two-year-old son play with him and awaiting a transplant," explains Mendoza.

The most recent United States census reports that Hispanics represent approximately 16% of the total population, but they make up a higher percentage of people awaiting a transplant: nearly 18% of the 115,000 people on the waiting list are Hispanics.

In the case of little Christopher, he too can be saved if they find a living or a deceased donor whose liver is compatible.

"My little boy has been through so much pain, and I think of the pain that is still to come," reflects Raymundo, who notes that tests have already been performed in his family, and they are not compatible with Christopher.

"It makes me feel even worse knowing that we aren't the ones who can help him, and maybe this is happening to other families. It's for this reason that my husband and I already registered as donors to help others in need," stated Raymundo.

Mendoza said that during the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, we can further demonstrate our pride and privilege of saving lives, informing ourselves about organ donation and joining the state organ & tissue donor register. It takes 30 seconds and can be done through www.giftofhope.org, or by calling (630) 758-2744.

* United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) is the private, non-profit organization that manages the nation's organ transplant system.

About Gift of Hope

Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network is proud to be the not-for-profit that coordinates the organ and tissue donation and serves families of donors in Illinois and northwest Indiana. Since its inception in 1986, Gift of Hope has coordinated donations that have saved the lives of more than 18,000 organ transplant recipients and improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of tissue transplant recipients.

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