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## YOUNG DRIVERS AND OLDER ADULTS LESS LIKELY TO REGISTER AS ORGAN AND TISSUE DONORS IN CALIFORNIA

### April's DMV/Donate Life California Month Aims to Increase Donor Designation Rate Among State's Drivers

**SACRAMENTO, Calif., Apr. 1, 2010** – As the nation's organ and tissue donation community joins together to observe April's National Donate Life Month, Californians can celebrate the enrollment of 6.3 million residents as organ and tissue donors, making the state's donor registry the largest in the U.S.

"Since more than 97 percent of these registered donors have enrolled through the DMV, April is celebrated in our state as DMV/Donate Life California Month," said Bryan Stewart, president of Donate Life California. "Ours is truly a partnership for life."

However, California residents still lag behind most of the nation when offered the opportunity to register. In 2009, only 26 percent of DMV customers applying for or renewing their driver's licenses and ID cards checked 'yes' on their forms to register as donors, ranking in the bottom fifth. In addition, of 26 million licensed drivers and ID holders, only 23 percent have signed up to be organ and tissue donors.

According to Donate Life California data, populations that are less likely to register as organ and tissue donors are both young drivers (between the ages of 15 and 19), and adults age 50 and over.

"Both groups have a tendency to rule themselves out for well-intentioned reasons," explained Stewart, "Many first-time drivers believe they are not yet old enough to make the donation decision, while many adults over the age of 50 think their advanced age or medical conditions are reasons for ruling themselves out thinking they are protecting others."

In fact, anyone can be a donor, a 93-year-old kidney donor and a 99-year-old cornea donor set the national records for oldest organ and tissue donors. Age and most medical conditions do not exclude one from being a suitable donor, and all potential donors are evaluated by medical professionals on a case-by-case basis.

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“We urge older Californians to register their decision to donate, regardless of their age or medical history, so that no opportunity to help others is lost,” said Stewart.

As for younger Californians, teens who apply for their first driver’s license may sign up on the registry –in fact, teens as young as 13 can register on line-, but their parents will make the final decision about organ and tissue donation at the appropriate time if they are younger than 18.

Despite the state’s lower donor registration rates, the Donate Life California Registry plays an increasingly essential role in saving and healing Californians in need of organ and tissue transplants. Since the registry was introduced in April 2005, donors who had registered prior to death have saved more than 900 lives through organ donation and healed more than 30,000 through cornea and tissue donation. In 2009 alone, 134 registered organ donors and 414 registered tissue donors were recovered by the state’s organ and tissue recovery organizations.

Of the more than 106,000 patients currently listed on the National Organ Transplant Waiting List, approximately 20 percent are registered in California, resulting in a disproportionate need for donated organs that magnifies every lost donation opportunity.

“The only way to ensure that your wish to save lives as a donor is honored is by registering with Donate Life California,” said Stewart. “Checking ‘yes’ at the DMV could make all the difference in the world to someone whose only hope for survival relies on another’s compassion.”

Donate Life California is the nonprofit, state-authorized organ and tissue donor registry, administered by California’s four nonprofit, federally designated organ recovery organizations, each responsible for facilitating the donation process in the state: California Transplant Donor Network, Golden State Donor Services, Lifesharing and OneLegacy.

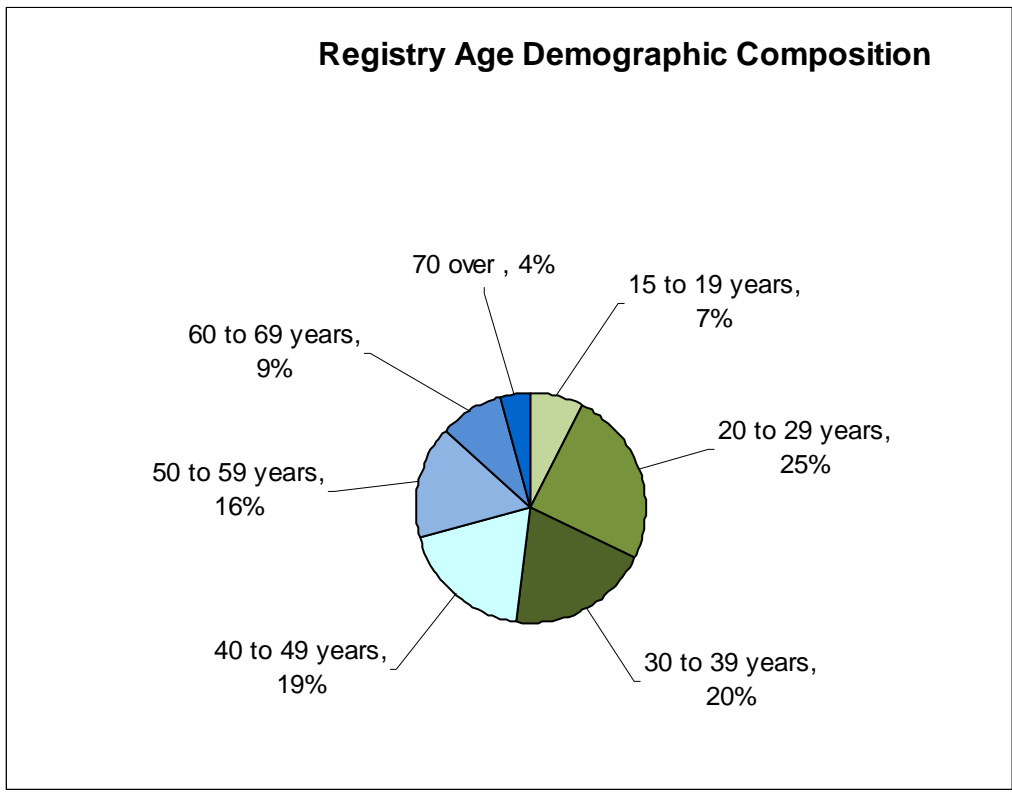
For more information, please visit <http://www.dmv.ca.gov/about/donateLife/donateLife.htm>, [www.donateLIFEcalifornia.org](http://www.donateLIFEcalifornia.org) or in Spanish at [www.doneVIDAcalifornia.org](http://www.doneVIDAcalifornia.org).

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(Editor’s note: Donor registration data by age follows)

**Age Demographics of Registered Donors**

Age Category	Total Population <i>2006 Census Estimates</i>	Percentage of total drivers	Percentage registered to donate
15 to 19 years	2,721,081	16%	7%
20 to 29 years	5,350,421	28%	25%
30 to 39 years	5,363,403	22%	20%
40 to 49 years	5,436,317	21%	19%
50 to 59 years	4,345,741	21%	16%
60 to 69 years	2,520,058	22%	9%
70 years and over	2,381,969	10%	4%
Total population over 15 years	28,118,990		



Data: Donate Life California, as of 12/31/09