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COMING TOMORROW

Endorsements

The Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People may be making their endorsements known for the election cycle

Organ transplant applicants on display

The 'Wall of Hope' features photos of 3,000 N.C. residents waiting for donors

BY WHITNEY ISENHOWER
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Images can speak louder than words.

To symbolize the nearly 3,000 North Carolinians waiting for organ transplants, Carolina Donor Services has erected a "Wall of Hope" with 3,000 people's pictures. Short biographies and photos of people who need transplants accompany the wall's other pictures, meant to represent those awaiting a donation.

The wall, which was set up on Friday afternoon, is on display at the American Tobacco Campus' courtyard today.

Greg House, who works at the GlaxoSmithKline offices in the warehouse and visited the wall on Friday, said the exhibit had the right idea because it made him realize how large the number 3,000 really is.

"When you see faces and pictures on a wall, there's a lot more impact," House said.

The display, measuring nearly 80 feet long by 6 feet high, has been traveling throughout the state since the beginning of the month, starting in Winston-Salem. It will return to Rocky Mount for a second showing after it leaves Durham on Sunday morning.

Jeannine Sato, a Donor Services spokeswoman, said part of the wall's mission is to let people know how to become a donor and what that process means.

Sato said many people think a heart on their driver's licenses is enough, but they also need to sign an official donor card and make their decision known to family members.

"One of our big messages is to let people know you can sign a donor card today," Sato said.

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"People are confused about it, so this is a chance for us to give some answers and tell them the facts."

Sato said several dozen people signed cards at the event, which also featured free Popsicles, games and an appearance by Wool E. Bull. About 60 people attended the wall's opening, and others milled in and out of the display throughout the hour.

Diane Menzie, who attended the launch, received a kidney transplant about a year ago from her sister, Donor Services volunteer Megan Lewis.

"I think I'm very lucky because there are so many people waiting," Menzie said.

After attending the event, Menzie and Lewis presented their donation and transplant tale on National Public Radio's StoryCorps program.

Lewis said being a donor was not a hard or scary process, as some might believe.

"The only time I was nervous was right before the surgery because it's a major surgery," Lewis said. "Making the decision to donate wasn't hard at all."

Duke Transplant Center, the UNC Comprehensive Transplant Center, East Carolina University's center, the Wake Forest University center and Carolinas Medical Center in Char-

lotte are the only places in the state where patients are added to the waiting list.

Durham Mayor Bill Bell signed a proclamation dubbing April as "Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Month" in the city, and N.C. Gov. Mike Easley has signed a similar declaration for the state.

City Council member Mike Woodard presented the proclamation at the wall's launch.

Sato said many mayors are making similar announcements, and she hopes these efforts and events such as the wall bring the issue to light.

"People who are waiting for transplants, they need as much awareness as possible so they can increase the donation rate."