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FREE Press

FLORIDA KEYS

Celebrate the holidays



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FREE

UPPER KEYS

Clergy encouraging organ donations

Islamorada Chamber of Commerce
presents the Ninth Annual 2013
Holiday Festival
Friday Dec 6 4pm-10pm

BY ROBERT SILK
Free Press Staff

UPPER KEYS — A group of local clergy has banded together to encourage Upper Keys residents to register as organ donors this winter.

"I think people often times think there's still time, but you never know," said Pam Feeser, who heads Baptist Hospital's Community Health Ministries in Tavernier. "So why wait?"

The outreach effort is being undertaken in honor of the late Talia Agler, who in January 2012, at age 26, was struck by a motorist and killed while jogging at the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Agler's parents, Richard and Mindy, live in Key Largo, and Richard is a retired rabbi. Talia had signed up for the organ donor stamp on her driver's license, so six of her organs, including her heart, were used in transplants, giving life to five individuals.

The group of clergy, which includes Feeser and Richard Agler, as well as the Rev. Charles Cannon of St. James



Contributed photo

Talia Agler, an organ donor, gave life to five recipients after her death in January 2012.

the Fisherman Episcopal Church in Islamorada and Pastor Kerry Foote of Burton Memorial United Methodist Church, is hoping to sign up 2,300 organ donors in their drive. They'll keep their "Tali," a play on Talia Agler's nick-

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name, by registering people at designated church services and by tracking sign-ups through the donatelifeflorida.org website.

The next sign-up event is scheduled for the Sunday, Dec. 1, service at St. James the Fisherman. Agler said he's working on scheduling sign-ups at other organizations around the area, including

Upper Keys Rotary. In addition, Feeser is facilitating registrations at the Community Health Ministries office, located next to Chad's Deli at mile marker 92.3, bayside, or by phone at 852-1612.

She called on other churches and religious organizations to join in the effort.

"Talia's story is so touching, and for one person to be able to save five other people is just astounding to me," Feeser said. "God calls us not just to love one another but to help

give life wherever needed."

Richard Agler, who with wife Mindy met the recipient of Talia's heart in an emotional encounter last April, said that working for the cause of organ donation helps him make sense out of his daughter's otherwise senseless death.

"Tali is not able to do things in her name anymore," he said. "I guess I kind of feel that it is our job to do the good things in her name that she's not able to do herself."

rsilk@keysnews.com