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## 2017 ROSE PARADE PARTICIPANTS WILL BE “TEAMMATES IN LIFE” ABOARD THE 14<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DONATE LIFE ROSE PARADE® FLOAT

*96 Donors, Donor Families and Recipients Nationwide to Gather in Pasadena  
and Inspire Others on the Life-Giving Power of Organ, Eye and Tissue Donation*

**LOS ANGELES, Calif. – Dec. 19, 2016** – The 14<sup>th</sup> annual **Donate Life float** depicts a spectacular Polynesian-style catamaran that will sail the streets of Pasadena during the **2017 Tournament of Roses Parade** on Monday, January 2, 2017. This year’s theme, **Teammates in Life**, reminds us that no one succeeds alone and that we all thrive by working together. The float will feature **96 men, women and children** who have given and received the gift of life, the most selfless act one can show to another.

The **2017 Donate Life Rose Parade® Float, Teammates in Life**, will feature:

- **24 riders**, who are organ and tissue recipients, and, in some cases, family members representing loved ones who were transplant recipients.
- **12 walkers**, including living donors and recipients as well as one of the doctors who has helped hundreds of patients with a second chance at life through organ donation.
- **60 floragraphs** that will adorn the sails of the catamaran. These are floral portraits made from organic materials and depicting donors who gave the ultimate gift of life to others after their passing.

“This year’s theme, ‘**Teammates in Life**’ shares the incredibly powerful message that when we choose to take care of one another through life’s journey, pay it forward, and honor those who have helped us on this journey, we, our families, our communities, and the world are richer,” said Tom Mone, Chairman of the [Donate Life float](#) committee and CEO of [OneLegacy](#), the nonprofit organ, eye and tissue recovery organization serving the greater Los Angeles area. “Lifesaving and healing organ, eye and tissue donation and transplantation is a dramatic example of how we are all *teammates in life*.”

“The Gift of Life starts when our donors’ journey is done, symbolized by the 60 floragraphs of actual donors on the sails, that inspire and help propel 24 organ and tissue recipients, who are rowing in unison with renewed health on their shared journey,” added Tom Mone. “They are accompanied by 12 living donors and recipients walking alongside the float; reminding us that we can share life and good health while we are giving life and strength to our *Teammates in Life*. Each of the 96 riders, walkers and floragraph honorees who will sail on the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Donate Life float have an amazing story to tell. With over 120,000 people waiting on the national transplant list today, we hope that these honorees will inspire millions more to learn the power each one of us has to save lives when we register as donors.”

Our diverse 96 honorees hail from across the country, with men, women and children of all ages. They remind us that organ, eye and tissue donation transcends all barriers and that no matter how different we look on the outside, we are all the same inside.

The following are some of the remarkable stories from the 2017 Donate Life Float participants:

### **Float Walkers: The Nick Damon Memorial Kidney Chain (20 donors and recipients)**

Three donors and three recipients from this chain will be walkers on the Donate Life float.

**Harry Damon** joins us from Grand Rapids, Michigan. After losing his son Nick and trying to cope with his death, Harry finally found peace by stepping forward and offering to share his health with someone in need through the miracle of transplantation. The hard work of many skillful minds and hands, including **transplant surgeon Jeffrey Veale, MD**, who runs the **UCLA Kidney Donor Exchange Program**, created a chain of donors and recipients around the nation.

A kidney chain begins when an altruistic donor (like Harry) wants to donate to someone in need, and the chain provides people who cannot receive a kidney from a loved one or friend (because of incompatibility issues) with the opportunity to still receive a kidney, through an exchange between other pairs of recipients and donors who are incompatible.

Harry will be joined by two donors and three recipients, including **Sheila Whitney** of Compton, California, an African American woman who, after being on dialysis three hours a day for more than six years as a result of lupus, received Harry's kidney. Her son **Reginal "Reggie" Arnes Griffin**, who was unable to donate to his mother, donated his kidney to **Keenan Cheung**, an Asian American father of three from La Canada, California, who experienced kidney failure. Keenan's wife, **Jeanne Cheung**, continued the chain by donating her kidney to **Sonia Valencia**, a Hispanic teacher from Commerce, California, who was suffering from Berger's disease. This chain has continued matching incompatible pairs over and over, **transcending all barriers of skin color, gender or religion**. The Nick Damon Memorial Kidney Chain is a true testament of the power of altruism and organ donation to save lives.

*Fact: There are nearly 120,000 people currently listed on the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) national list, as they wait for a lifesaving organ donation. Nearly 80 percent of people on the national transplant waiting list are in need of a kidney. It is medically impossible to meet this need with deceased donations, making living donations even more crucial.*

### **Float Rider: Turia Pitt**

**Turia Pitt**, a tissue recipient and rider on the float, is joining us from Australia. A fitness enthusiast, mining engineer and model, Turia found herself caught in a firestorm while competing in a 100 km ultra-marathon in Western Australia. With burns to 64 percent of her body, doctors turned to the U.S. to find the tissue needed to save her life. Post skin grafting and extensive physical therapy, Turia continues to compete in triathlon and iron-man events.

*Fact: Every year, there are about 20,000 tissue donors nationwide. Nearly a million tissue transplant surgeries are performed every year in the United States. It is estimated that one in 20 Americans will need some type of tissue transplant.*

### **Floragraph Honoree: P.J. Wolf**

Floragraph honoree **Philip John "P.J." Wolf** was a handsome 8-year-old who passed away more than 25 years ago, and his family decided to donate his organs and tissue. One of his heart valves was transplanted to **Katy Portell**, a float rider who received her life-saving transplant when she was 4 years old, during an open-heart surgery. Born in Houston, Texas, with several heart defects, **Katy Portell** was not expected to live. Now, 22 years later, Katy has graduated college, lived in Alaska, volunteered for multiple Donate Life affiliates, and has worked in the donation and transplantation field for two years with Southwest Transplant Alliance. **P.J.'s family will meet Katy Portell for the first time on December 29, 2016, in Pasadena.**

*Fact: An organ donor can save the lives of up to eight people by donating their heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, pancreas and small intestines, and enhance the lives of up to 100 people by donating their corneas, skin, bones, heart valves and more.*

Additional honorees include **Veronica Cosme** (rider), who received a kidney from her deceased 18-year old niece, **Alyssa Galvan** (floragraph) and who now volunteers her time to promote organ, eye and tissue donation as a OneLegacy Ambassador; **Kirby Cochran** (rider), a hard-working detective for the Johnson County Sheriff's Office who received a life-saving liver transplant from **Tracy Driscoll** (floragraph) and who had the privilege of meeting his donor's family; and **Karen Koch** (rider), who after suffering from Dilated Cardiomyopathy, received a life-saving transplant in 2015. Karen is now able to travel to support her son's racecar driving career.

The Donate Life Rose Parade Float began on New Year's Day 2004, prompted by lung recipient **Gary Foxen** (Orange, CA), as a way to show gratitude to the donors who made life-saving transplants like his possible, and to inspire others to become organ, eye, and tissue donors. Today millions of Rose Parade viewers see the float from the stands in Pasadena, CA and on TV across the world.

For information on the Donate Life float and all of the riders, walkers, and floragraph honorees, please visit [www.donatelifefloat.org](http://www.donatelifefloat.org).

All Donate Life float [sponsors](#) encourage parade viewers to join the nation's more than 117 million registered donors so that everyone whose life depends on a transplant may receive one. Registrations can be made through state registries, links to which can be found at [www.DonateLifeAmerica.org](http://www.DonateLifeAmerica.org).

This year's Rose Parade theme "**Echoes of Success**" tells the story of how character is developed through the selfless contribution of others and celebrates their inspirational gifts. The Donate Life float participants have given and received the gift of life, the most selfless act one can show to another and are truly **Teammates in Life**.

As the world's most visible campaign to inspire organ, eye and tissue donation, The Donate Life Rose Parade® Float inspires viewers to help the over one million people in need of organ, eye or tissue transplants each year. Register today to become an organ, eye or tissue donor by visiting [DonateLifeAmerica.org](http://DonateLifeAmerica.org).

The 128th Rose Parade presented by Honda will take place Monday, January 2, 2017, at 8 a.m. (PST) featuring majestic floats made out of flowers, plants and seeds. For additional information on the Tournament of Roses please visit the official website at [www.tournamentofroses.com](http://www.tournamentofroses.com).

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