

**For Immediate Release**

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# TRANSPLANT RECIPIENTS TO *'LIGHT UP THE WORLD'* ABOARD DONATE LIFE FLOAT IN 2014 ROSE PARADE® FLOAT

# Riders from 19 States and Taiwan Thank Their Organ, Tissue and Eye Donors for Life-Saving Gifts on World Stage

**LOS ANGELES, Calif.** – **Sept. 24, 2013** – Thirty fortunate recipients of organ and tissue transplants will "Light Up the World" with their dramatic and heartrending stories as riders aboard the 11th annual **Donate Life float in the 2014 Rose Parade**, which reaches tens of millions of viewers across the U.S. and worldwide. Each individual was selected by an organization for their courage, service and advocacy in light of the life-saving transplants they received from generous donors.

The [30 riders](http://www.donatelifefloat.org/prod/components/media_center/riders/riders_2014.html) range in age from 18 to 77, and hail from 19 states – Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia – and Taiwan. Their lives have been affected by a broad spectrum of challenges and salvations, all connected by one common denominator: the gift of life.

"Our float riders have shown what it means to 'Light Up the World' by virtue of their survival and service to their local communities," reflected Bryan Stewart, chairman of the Donate Life Rose Parade Float Committee and vice president of communications at [OneLegacy](http://www.onelegacy.org/site/index.html), the nonprofit organ and tissue organization serving the greater Los Angeles area. "We are inspired by the 2014 Rose Parade theme, "Dreams Come True," to spotlight individuals who embody what organ, eye and tissue donation makes possible in the hope that viewers will be inspired to register as donors."

Because the conditions allowing donation to occur are rare, many millions of committed donors are required to help those in need. A single organ donor can save the lives of eight people through organ donation, while a tissue donor can save and heal 50 or more lives through the gifts of heart valves, corneas, skin, bone, and tendons that mend hearts, cure blindness, restore mobility and overcome burns.

Three riders courageously struggled through their teens and beyond with diabetes, which affects more than 25 million people nationwide, before living free of insulin injections through pancreas transplants. For **Linda Ramos** (Schererville, Ind.), a donated sclera helped prevent blindness that was treated around the time of her uncommon pancreas-only transplant. **Faith Carlin** (Philadelphia, Pa.) and **Nita French** (Norman, Okla.) gave birth to children after receiving life-saving kidney-pancreas transplants, and **Julie Allred** (Concord, N.C.) received two pancreatic islet cell transplants that freed her from life-threatening episodes of hypoglycemia.

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Three riders were inspired by their liver transplant experience to help individuals and families undertake their own transplant journeys. **Debbie Morgan** (Riverside, Calif.) serves as president of the United Organ Transplant Association; **Richard Perez** (Rochester, N.Y.) helps patients at Strong Memorial Hospital prepare for transplant; and **Amy Tippins** (Norcross, Ga.) volunteers at Camp Independence, which hosts families affected by organ transplants.

The transplantation of lungs saved the lives of two riders on opposite ends of their careers. California State Senator **Sharon Runner** (Sacramento, Calif.) was able to complete her term in the legislature and continue her decades of public service, while **Madison Shinaberry** (Harrisonburg, Va.) was able to return to her study of ballet, the passion of her young life.

**Arthur Joven "AJ" Reyes** (Fairfield, Calif.) had his college years interrupted by a viral infection that led to the need for a heart transplant, while **Connor Randall** (Arvada, Colo.) received his first heart transplant before he could walk and his second before he entered the eighth grade. Today both are active college students with bright futures ahead of them.

**Gregory Welsh** (Goodyear, Ariz.) has experienced both sides of donation. Fifteen years after his wife became an organ donor, he received a transplant that freed him from an artificial heart. Another heart recipient, **Brian Keith Gilliam** (Huffman, Tex.) was inspired to spearhead the effort to bring the 2014 Transplant Games to Houston.

Three Donate Life float riders were freed from a life of dialysis by living donors. For **John Cervantes** (Chino, Calif.) and **Craig Hostert** (Fullerton, Calif.), family members came to their rescue: John received a kidney from his brother **Michael**, and Craig's son **Justin** donated a kidney to him 14 years after he received the same gift from his wife **Kathleen**. JePahl White's wife **LaKishia** (Fresno, Calif.) was not a biological match for her husband, but through a paired exchange he received a kidney from **Jessica Jurado**, while LaKishia donated to a recipient in Philadelphia. All five living donors will be among a contingent of 12 walkers who will accompany the float on its five-mile journey.

The 2014 Donate Life Rose Parade Float entry features a festival of lanterns illuminating 30 riders and 12 living organ donors walking alongside the entire five-mile route. The float's five enormous lanterns are adorned with 78 memorial floragraph portraits of deceased donors whose legacies of life shine brightly. The riders are seated throughout a dedication garden filled with thousands of roses bearing personal messages of love, hope and remembrance.

Tissue and bone donors were essential to help three riders recover from devastating injuries that threatened their way of life. **Edward A. Bonfiglio** (Runnemede, N.J.) took a round in Afghanistan that severed his sciatic nerve; new father **David Jenkins** (Grand Junction, Colo.) lost one leg and nearly lost his other leg in an industrial accident; and the femur of **Harry Rambo** (Alachua, Fla.) was shattered in a skydiving accident. All are thankful for the gifts of tissue donation that made it possible for them to return to fully active lives.

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In addition, two riders demonstrate how common problems – breast reconstruction and back surgery – can be resolved through tissue donation. **Sue Herrick Pilon** (Wyandotte, Mich.) is the third generation to have breast cancer. A dermal allograft (donated tissue) served as the base on which her breast could be reconstructed**. Katharine Lawrence** (Pattenburg, N.J.) was able to get back to a life of service to others after donor tissue and bone were used to fuse vertebrae in her third back surgery.

Since its debut on New Year's Day 2004, the Donate Life Rose Parade float has become the world's most visible campaign to inspire people to become organ, eye, and tissue donors. The campaign began as an idea expressed in a letter by lung recipient Gary Foxen of Orange, Calif., who wanted to show gratitude to donors who make life-saving transplants possible. Now, in addition to the 40 million viewers who view the Rose Parade in the stands and on TV, hundreds of events are held in cities and towns around the country to put the finishing touches on floragraph portraits and present dedicated roses to donor families and community partners that play a role in making donation possible.

The 2014 Donate Life float is built by Phoenix Decorating Company from a design by Dave Pittman and is coordinated by Los Angeles-based **OneLegacy**, the world's largest organ, eye and tissue recovery organization. Each year, the Donate Life float campaign is supported by more than 140 official sponsors from coast to coast, including organ, eye and tissue recovery organizations, tissue processors, hospitals, transplant centers, state donor registries, funeral homes, donor family foundations and affiliated organizations. Joining OneLegacy as top-level benefactors are:

* **American Association of Tissue Banks (AATB)**, which is dedicated to ensuring that human tissues intended for transplantation are safe and free of infectious disease, of uniform high quality, and available in quantities sufficient to meet national needs;
* **Dignity Memorial®** network, North America's largest network of funeral, cremation and cemetery service providers;
* **Donate Life America**, a nonprofit alliance of national organizations and state teams across the United States committed to increasing organ, eye and tissue donation;
* **Donate Life Run/Walk Committee**, the Orange County-based producer of the nation's largest donation-themed 5K fundraising event;
* **Josiah's House**, a Tennessee-based nonprofit ministering to boys in the Dominican Republic in honor of Josiah Berger;
* **The Order of St. Lazarus**, an international community of Christian men and women devoted to ecumenical spirituality, worldwide charity and chivalric tradition;
* **SightLife**, a nonprofit eye bank focused on eliminating corneal blindness in the United States and worldwide; and
* **TBI/Tissue Banks International**, a nonprofit network of eye and tissue banks and the largest provider of ocular tissue in the world.

"Every single person who takes action to be a donor gives hope to the nearly 120,000 people across America waiting for their dream – a life-saving organ transplant – to come true," said Stewart. "In addition to the lives saved by deceased donors, approximately 6,000 lives per year are saved by living kidney and liver donors."

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The Donate Life Rose Parade Float's family of sponsors urges viewers to help make dreams come true for more than one million people in need of life-saving and healing organ, tissue and cornea transplants. Join America's 113 million registered donors so that everyone whose life and livelihood depends on a transplant can have one. Sign up when renewing your driver's license or by visiting [www.DonateLifeAmerica.org](http://www.DonateLifeAmerica.org). Further information about the Donate Life float can be found at [www.donatelifefloat.org](http://www.donatelifefloat.org).

The Pasadena Tournament of Roses is a volunteer organization that annually hosts the Rose Parade® presented by Honda, Rose Bowl Game® presented by VIZIO and various associated events. The 125th Rose Parade presented by Honda, themed "Dreams Come True," will take place Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2014, at 8 a.m. (PST) featuring majestic floral floats, high-stepping equestrian units and spirited marching bands. Following the parade, the 100th Rose Bowl Game presented by VIZIO will kick off at 2:10 p.m. and feature an exciting match-up between two of the top collegiate football teams in the nation. 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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(Note to editors: Full list of riders and story capsules follows)

**Donate Life Rose Parade® Float**

**2014 Float Riders**

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| **Name** | **Relationship to Donation** | **Age** | **Hometown** | **Occupation** | **Sponsored by** |
| **Julie M. Allred** | Pancreatic Islet Cell Recipient | 45 | Concord, NC | RN - School Nurse | Emory Transplant Center |
| ***Her story:*** | Julie Allred was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, often known as juvenile or insulin dependent diabetes, at the age of 10. At that time, in the late 1970s, treatment options were limited; she was not expected to live to 30 or have children. Julie overcame tremendous odds to make it to her thirties – and gave birth to a healthy daughter. By age 40 she was beginning to experience daily episodes of hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar. Through a clinical trial, Julie received transplanted pancreatic islet cells, which produce insulin, in 2011 and 2012. As life threatening episodes of hypoglycemia came to an end, Julie sees life as "filled with excitement instead of fear." | | | | |
| **Melissa Bensouda** | Kidney Recipient | 38 | Lee's Summit, MO | Relationship Manager | Explore Transplant |
| ***Her story:*** | At 24 years old, Melissa was diagnosed with chronic kidney disease after giving birth to her second daughter. After her third child, a son, was born, she lost all kidney function. Melissa's choice to undergo home-based hemodialysis enabled her to continue her full time job, raise two daughters and a severely autistic son on her own, and advocate for kidney patients. On April 16, 2012, Melissa's wait of nearly ten years for a transplant finally came to an end. Melissa looks forward to connecting with the family of her life-saving donor in the near future so she can share with them what their generosity has made possible. | | | | |
| **Edward A. Bonfiglio** | Tissue Recipient | 28 | Runnemede, NJ | Student | American Association of Tissue Banks (AATB) in partnership with AxoGen |
| ***His story:*** | Edward is an American hero. During his third deployment in 2009, the Navy Corpsman was on a routine foot patrol in Afghanistan when his unit was ambushed. Edward took a round to the sciatic nerve in his left leg and lost all function and feeling below his knee. Edward opted for surgery to repair the severed peripheral nerve with a nerve allograft for bridging severed nerves. Less than three years later, he was able to walk and jog independently. Now 28, the Purple Heart recipient is a student at Penn State University where he is studying to be a physician's assistant and is actively training for the Paralympics. | | | | |
| **Kim Burdakin** | Liver Recipient | 53 | Muscatine, IA | Retired | Iowa Donor Network |
| ***Her story:*** | In April 2000, after a sudden onset of acute liver failure, Kim Burdakin's sister Kay volunteered to donate a portion of her liver to save Kim's life. Just as the operation was getting underway, the liver of a young Michigan man who died in a car accident was allocated to Kim. Soon after her transplant, Kim began writing to her donor family; by 2008 she had met the family of then-21-year-old Steven Toth. Thanks to Steven's gift, Kim was able to marry her best friend Dave, see her daughters graduate from college, and celebrate at her oldest daughter's wedding. Said Kim, "Every day I thank God for giving me the faith to believe in miracles!" | | | | |
| **Faith Carlin** | Kidney/Pancreas Recipient | 52 | Philadelphia, PA | Research Coordinator, National Transplantation Pregnancy Registry at Gift of Life Institute | Gift of Life Donor Program |
| ***Her story:*** | At 15, Faith Carlin was diagnosed with insulin dependent diabetes. Due to complications over the years, Faith had to start on dialysis. At 31, she received a double kidney/pancreas transplant from donor Douglas Shriver. "Doug's gifts of a kidney and pancreas have kept me healthy for 21 years, and I now work part-time with the National Transplantation Pregnancy Registry at Gift of Life Institute," Faith said. "These gifts have allowed me to become a wife, mother, volunteer and research coordinator with the NTPR, and to develop relationships with fellow transplant recipients and with donor family members that I cherish. For this, I am forever grateful to Doug and his family." | | | | |

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| **John Cervantes** | Kidney Recipient | 46 | Chino, CA | Police Officer, Chino Police Department | Loma Linda University Medical Center Transplantation Institute |
| ***His story:*** | John Cervantes suffered kidney problems from an early age, including surgery at age 14 for bilateral kidney stone removal. While John experienced infections off and on for two decades, he didn't let it get in the way of his dream to be a police officer. In 2009, after a bad infection led to a dramatic drop in kidney function, John went on dialysis and his transplant journey began. His brother Michael ended up being a match, and the transplant made a world of difference to John. "The next day after the transplant, I felt amazing – so much more energy!" John thanks his family, the Chino Police Department (his employer of 12 years) and God for his life. | | | | |
| **Yang-Chuan Chang** | Kidney Recipient | 49 | Hualien City, Taiwan (R.O.C.) | Retired soldier | Tzu Chi Medical Foundation |
| ***His story:*** | In 1995, at the age of 35, Yang-Chuan Chang caught a bad cold that led to kidney failure. After nine years of waiting on the transplant list, Yang-Chuan received a call from Tzu Chi Hospital in Hualien that a donated kidney had been matched to him, and he now enjoys a life free from dialysis. "I feel alive," said Yang-Chuan. "I am grateful to donors and donor families every single day for saving me and my family." As a way to "pay it forward," Yang-Chuan dedicates his time as a Tzu Chi Commissioner leading the Hualien area in charity works "to relieve our community from suffering." | | | | |
| **Dan Cuda** | Kidney Recipient | 68 | Lincoln, NE | Real Estate | Cytonet, LLC in partnership with Nebraska Organ Recovery |
| ***His story:*** | In 1985, Jeanne and Dan Cuda's seven-year-old son Brad was fatally struck by a vehicle. Even at such a young age he knew he wanted to be an organ donor. Twenty-two years later, the Cudas received an unexpected letter from one of the recipients, who was an 18-year-old college freshman when she received one of Brad's kidneys. Ironically, following a diagnosis of polycistic kidney disease, at the age of 48 Dan received a transplant in November 1993. Two decades later he can say, "This was a life-saving and life-changing experience that allowed me to be healthy and happy once again." | | | | |
| **Nita French** | Kidney/Pancreas Recipient | 41 | Norman, OK | Homemaker | LifeShare Transplant Donor Services of Oklahoma |
| ***Her story:*** | Nita French had lived with diabetes since the seventh grade, but it wasn't until she became pregnant that she suffered kidney failure. Her life changed dramatically in 2001 when, after two years on the transplant waiting list, a donated pancreas was matched to her. Since then she has been able to enjoy her role as a wife and mother of four children, three of whom were remarkably born after her transplant. "Every day that I get to raise my children, to love my husband, to serve in my church, to live in my community is a tribute to Patrick, his parents and their family," shared Nita. | | | | |
| **Brian Keith Gilliam** | Heart Recipient | 52 | Huffman, TX | Construction | Donate Life Texas |
| ***His story:*** | Born with aortic stenosis, Brian Gilliam wasn't diagnosed with congestive heart failure until 2004. His only chance for survival was a heart transplant, which he received on Nov. 23, 2008. Brian's experience, and the loss of his son Chad in 2000, has made him extraordinarily passionate about donation and the Transplant Games of America. As team manager for Team Texas, Brian spearheaded the effort to bring the 2014 Transplant Games to Houston. "I promote the Transplant Games and compete in honor of Chad and my donor, a young man whose name I do not know," said Brian. | | | | |
| **Craig Hostert** | Kidney Recipient | 55 | Fullerton, CA | CFO, Parkwest General Contractors | Donate Life Run/Walk Committee |
| ***His story:*** | In 1986, Craig Hostert was diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder of the kidneys. After more than two years on dialysis, his wife Kathleen donated a kidney to him. Fourteen years later, his transplanted kidney suddenly stopped working, returning Craig to dialysis. On Dec. 11, 2012, Craig's life was once again saved by a living donation from a family member, this time by his son Justin. "Our entire family is committed to do whatever we can to celebrate the miracle of transplantation," said Craig. "We look forward to continuing the Donate Life Run/Walk," which has grown to be the largest gathering in the country to promote donation. | | | | |

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| **David Jenkins** | Bone Recipient | 30 | Grand Junction, CO | Field Employee Development Coordinator | AlloSource |
| ***His story:*** | In Jan. 2007, a workday just like any other turned life changing when David Jenkins had an on-the-job accident that resulted in the amputation of his right leg and a severe injury to his left. Doctors at Presbyterian St. Luke's in Denver devised a treatment to use allograft bone (donated from a deceased donor), as well as muscle and skin from his right thigh, to save his left leg. The procedure was successful, and David has since returned to his job and enjoys fishing, hiking, golfing and coaching his son's baseball team. David knows that the gracious act of his donor made it possible for him to thrive. | | | | |
| **Matt Katsarelis** | Liver Recipient | 53 | Katy, TX | Publisher of Katy, Sugar Land & Cy-Fair Magazines | Donate 4 Life |
| ***His story:*** | In 1995, Matt Katsarelis, then a 35-year-old husband and father, was diagnosed with hepatitis C. Thirteen years later, his condition had progressed to the point that he needed a liver transplant to survive. Matt received his gift of a donated liver on Easter Sunday of 2010, and he was able to return to work after six weeks. He now owns a small magazine publishing business. "The impact my transplant has had on my life is truly immeasurable," he said "Daily, I pray strength for the donor family. I am forever grateful to my donor. This gift of life not only saved me, it saved my family." | | | | |
| **Katharine Lawrence** | Bone Recipient | 49 | Asbury, NJ | Stay at home mom | Medtronic Spinal and Biologics in partnership with American Tissue Services Foundation |
| ***Her story:*** | Katherine Lawrence has always been a giver. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Katherine went to Mississippi to provide help to those in need and even hosted a displaced family. She did the same when Sandy struck New Jersey. Despite her active volunteer work, Katherine suffered with back pain. On September 4, 2012, Katharine underwent her third back surgery to fuse her L2 through L5 vertebrae. She also received donor bone to assist in the healing process. "I will always be eternally grateful to my donor whose gift allowed me to continue volunteering and helping others," said Katherine. | | | | |
| **Nefeterius Akeli McPherson** | Liver Recipient | 39 | Killeen, TX | Attorney | Taylor's Gift Foundation |
| ***Her story:*** | Nefeterius Akeli McPherson was diagnosed with secondary sclerosing cholangitis, a rare bile duct and liver disease, during her first year of law school. Despite her condition, she graduated with honors and passed the Texas bar in 2008. On Nov. 6, 2011, Nefeterius received her life-saving liver transplant from 12-year-old Taitlyn Shae Hughes. "It was so gut-wrenching to discover that a child saved my life," she recalled. "Thanks to Taitlyn, I have been able to return to the legal field, enjoy traveling and spend time with family and friends. Organ donation sees no race, gender, age, financial status or social class, and that is a beautiful thing." | | | | |
| **Debbie Morgan** | Liver Recipient | 57 | Riverside, CA | Accountant | OneLegacy |
| ***Her story:*** | In August 1996, Debbie Morgan was diagnosed with end-stage liver disease from alcohol-induced cirrhosis. She joined AA, her liver stabilized, and her doctors didn't think she would need a transplant. The experience inspired Debbie to join the United Organ Transplant Association (UOTA) to educate the community about organ donation and support people in need of and living with liver transplants. In 2007, a cancerous tumor developed on her liver, accelerating her need of a transplant; she received a donated liver on March 6, 2008. "Every day I am thankful to my donor and his family for giving me a second chance and a brand new life," she said. She now serves as President of UOTA and is a Regional Lead for OneLegacy's Donate Life Ambassadors volunteer program. | | | | |
| **Richard Perez** | Liver Recipient | 59 | Rochester, NY | Volunteer at Strong Memorial Hospital | Finger Lakes Donor Recovery Network & URMC Medical Center |
| ***His story:*** | After being diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver due to hepatitis C, Richard Perez was placed on the transplant waiting list in 2002. A ten-month wait ensued, during which his condition worsened. "Before you are lucky to receive an organ you are really sick and your quality of life is greatly diminished," recalled Richard. On July 21, 2003 Richard received his transplant, and he now volunteers at Strong Memorial Hospital to help and support other people as they prepare for their own transplant journey. "It has now been ten years since my transplant and I feel wonderful! Every day I'm so thankful to my donor and their family." | | | | |

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| **Sue Herrick Pilon** | Tissue Recipient | 55 | Wyandotte, MI | Director of Planning & Special Projects | Musculoskeletal Transplant Foundation |
| ***Her story:*** | At age 52, Sue Herrick Pilon was diagnosed with breast cancer, the third generation in her family with the disease. Since her cancer was discovered early, she was eligible for reconstructive surgery using a dermal allograft – human tissue from a donor used to create a base on which breast implants could immediately be inserted. Both surgeries were done the same day. Less than 24 hours after the surgery was completed, Sue was cancer-free. Today the mother of two and manager of a nonprofit agency exercises and travels often. "This is a tremendous gift I've been given," Sue emphasized. "I thank my donor family in my heart every day." | | | | |
| **Sherri Plair** | Kidney Recipient | 39 | Columbia, SC | Desk Agent, South Carolina DMV | Lucey Mortgage Corporation in partnership with LifePoint |
| ***Her story:*** | Sherri Plair had suffered from polycystic kidney disease for many years when she was placed on the transplant waiting list at age 29. After a five-year wait, including two on dialysis, her prayers were finally answered with a kidney transplant on Nov. 15, 2009. Since her transplant, Sherri has been living life to the fullest and has watched her daughter grow into a beautiful young woman. Sherri also became a volunteer with Donate Life South Carolina and LifePoint and was recently hired as an employee of the South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles, a strong supporter of Donate Life. "Life after my transplant is great!" she exclaimed. | | | | |
| **Harry Rambo** | Bone Recipient | 55 | Alachua, FL | Training Specialist, RTI Surgical | RTI Donor Services |
| ***His story:*** | Harry Rambo was skydiving from 9,000 feet when strong wind conditions resulted in a bad landing, shattering the shaft of his right femur. To rebuild his hip his doctor used cancellous chips from a donor, and after three months on crutches and two years with a cane, Harry, who now works for RTI Surgical, has lived pain-free and returned to skydiving. "I am forever grateful to the donor and their family who helped to restore my life and allow me to return to the things that I love to do," Harry said. "I love working at RTI because I have the opportunity to help others in the same way that tissue transplantation has helped me." | | | | |
| **Linda Ramos** | Pancreas & Sclera Recipient | 46 | Schererville, IN | Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant | Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network |
| ***Her story:*** | Linda Ramos spent the last two years of high school in and out of hospitals, constantly sick and fatigued due to Type I juvenile diabetes. After she got married, a high-risk pregnancy caused congestive heart failure, shutting down her kidneys, threatening her with blindness. Linda learned about the very uncommon pancreas-only transplant, and after a two-year wait a donor's gift saved her life. "I can't believe the way I feel," affirmed Linda. "I cheer my daughter on at her events, and started running and have competed in over 55 road races. The 120,000 people on the waiting list…deserve the same happy ending." | | | | |
| **Connor Randall** | Heart Recipient | 22 | Arvada, CO | Student | Donor Alliance |
| ***His story:*** | Connor Randall received his first heart before he learned how to walk. Ten years later, his body began to reject the transplanted heart; he received his second heart before he entered the eighth grade. He began to go into rejection again when he was in high school, but experimental treatments and medications returned him to health. Today, he is an active 22-year-old senior at Regis University studying economics and politics. He is honored to share his Rose Parade experience with his family and relates, "We didn't always have that future to look forward to, but now we do. And it's a big deal." | | | | |
| **Arthur Joven Reyes** | Heart Recipient | 28 | Fairfield, CA | Admissions Manager & CPR Instructor, Northbay Nursing Institute | California Transplant Donor Network |
| ***His story:*** | Arthur Joven "AJ" Reyes was a college student when a rare viral infection began to destroy his heart. With only a mechanical heart keeping him alive, at the age of 25 AJ received the new heart he needed. With his new heart working well, AJ is currently following up his B.A. in Healthcare Administration with a second degree. As a Donate Life Ambassador, he encourages other members of the Filipino community to register as donors. AJ also trains for and runs half-marathons – something he never would have thought was possible before his heart transplant. "I am doing it to honor my donor," said AJ. "I don't want this gift to be in vain." | | | | |

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| **Sharon Runner** | Lung Recipient | 59 | Sacramento, CA | State Senator (Ret.) | Donate Life California |
| ***Her story:*** | California State Senator Sharon Runner has spent her life in service to others, from founding a private school to serving in the state legislature. At 30, Sharon was diagnosed with scleroderma; by 2006, she had lost nearly 60 percent of her lung capacity and within five years would need a lung transplant. Thanks to an organ donation from a 36-year-old woman, Sharon returned to work in the Senate. She now serves on the Sierra Donor Services Advisory Board and the Legislative committee for the Scleroderma Foundation. "I am grateful daily to God, family, friends and especially to my donor for the life I now lead." she stated. | | | | |
| **Jerry L. Sexton, Sr.** | Liver/Kidney Recipient | 77 | Kokomo, IN | Customer Service, Staples | Indiana Organ Procurement Organization (IOPO) |
| ***His story:*** | In 2002, Jerry L. Sexton underwent a routine surgery that revealed his liver had become cirrhotic. After waiting four years on the transplant list, Jerry found his right kidney was failing as well, and soon thereafter had a successful double transplant. Rosie, Jerry's wife of 56 years, is herself a transplant recipient, with donated corneas in both eyes. To educate others about the need for donation, the Sextons became volunteers at the Indiana Organ Procurement Organization. Now 77, Jerry keeps busy volunteering and working part-time at Staples. "You don't want to stop and sit down, because then you realize you're old," he said. | | | | |
| **Madison Shinaberry** | Lung Recipient | 18 | Harrisonburg, VA | Student | Ryan Viator's Legacy in partnership with LifeNet Health |
| ***Her story:*** | For two years, Madison Shinaberry fought to live with pulmonary hypertension, a life-threatening disease of the lungs. Most devastatingly, she was forced to give up dancing ballet, something she had done her entire life. On January 13, 2009, 13-year-old Madison received a life-saving double-lung transplant that gave back to her all that the disease had taken from her young life. Currently, she is studying Politics at Washington and Lee University as a Johnson Scholar. She dances almost every day, and teaches ballet at a local studio. "Working to educate people about organ donation has become a passion of mine," affirmed Madison. "I am grateful that my transplant has given me these opportunities, along with a healthy life." | | | | |
| **Amy Nicole Tippins** | Liver & Tissue Recipient | 38 | Norcross, GA | CEO, RockScar Love Designs | Order of St. Lazarus |
| ***Her story:*** | After receiving her liver transplant, Amy Tippins has become a tireless advocate for organ donation. In 2009, Amy – who is also a tissue recipient – left the financial services industry to found RockScar Love Designs, a women's apparel company. Amy, now 38, volunteers at Camp Independence, a camp for families affected by organ transplantation, and enjoys public speaking. "In life, very few gifts have the power to drive you to serve others…in hopes of somehow coming close to repaying the joy you received," Amy said. "The gift of organ donation not only ignites this desire in me, but in everyone impacted by this priceless gift." | | | | |
| **Ana Maria Villalobos** | Bone Recipient | 58 | Whittier, CA | Embajadora de Done Vida | OneLegacy |
| ***Her story:*** | At age 27, Ana Maria Villalobos was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, a disease that causes inflammation of the joints, pain and severe mobility restrictions. Between 2002 and 2011, Ana Maria had both knees and hips replaced. "I was told by my doctor that the bone of tissue donors allowed me to heal better and faster," said a grateful Villalobos. "If it wasn't for the people who said yes to tissue donation and my surgeries, I would be in a wheelchair today." Ana Maria also volunteers for OneLegacy in memory of her son Moises, a nine-year dialysis patient who died within a year of receiving a kidney transplant. | | | | |
| **Gregory J. Welsh** | Heart Recipient | 49 | Goodyear, AZ | Drafter / IT Manager | Donor Network of Arizona |
| ***His story:*** | Gregory Welsh, a 49-year-old father and engineering drafter, is a remarkable example of the life-saving benefits of organ donation. After a fatal car accident in 1996, Gregory made the decision to donate his wife's organs. Fifteen years later, his generosity came full circle when on May 18, 2011, four months after suffering a heart attack that made him reliant on an artificial heart, Gregory received a heart transplant. He has since returned to work and is an active hiker and mountain biker. He has also made contact with the family of his donor, Fernando, and happily noted that "we keep in touch and get together often." | | | | |

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| **JePahl White** | Kidney Recipient | 38 | Fresno, CA | Community Organizer, Faith In Community | Living Donation California |
| ***His story:*** | In June 2004, after eight years on dialysis, JePahl received a kidney transplant. Five years later, after his transplanted kidney went into full rejection, his wife LaKishia approached him about becoming his donor. Because she was not a biological match, LaKishia continued to research possibilities and learned about paired exchange programs. On September 27, 2010, JePahl received a kidney from Jessica Jurado, who donated on behalf of her mother, who received a life-saving kidney transplant as part of a chain. LaKishia's donated kidney was transplanted two days later to a recipient in Pennsylvania. "I have a new family bond with Jessica and enjoy the new 'sister' in our family," JePahl acknowledged. | | | | |