

**For Immediate Release**

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# TWELVE LIVING KIDNEY DONORS TO WALK ALONGSIDE

# DONATE LIFE FLOAT IN 2015 ROSE PARADE®

# Two 70-year-old Living Kidney Donors Will Walk the Five-Mile Route

**LOS ANGELES, Calif.** – **Sept. 29, 2014** – Twelve generous yet otherwise ordinary people will take their places walking alongside the [Donate Life Float in the 2015 Rose Parade](http://www.donatelifefloat.org/)® on New Year’s Day. What makes these individuals so special is their willingness to save lives by donating a kidney – some of them altruistically – so that others can live.

"Eighty percent of people on the national transplant waiting list need kidneys, and it is medically impossible to meet this need with kidneys from the very rare opportunity of deceased donation,” said Tom Mone, chairman of the [Donate Life Float](http://www.donatelifefloat.org/prod/components/) committee and CEO of [OneLegacy](http://www.onelegacy.org/site/index.html), the nonprofit organ, eye and tissue recovery organization serving the greater Los Angeles area. “These 12 living donors have saved the lives of their loved ones, friends, and sometimes even strangers who would otherwise wait for years struggling on dialysis.

“Their generosity reminds all of us of our ability to save a life, a family, and a community by donating a kidney – and then celebrating all of the good that gift created. By walking the five-mile parade route, these donors also demonstrate that you can donate a kidney and be fully active and full of life and health. We hope that the millions who view the Parade will be inspired by these life-saving gifts and our 12 amazing walkers.”

Two of the donors who are walking this year are over 70 years old**. Maureen “Reenie” Harris** (Livingston, NJ), was 70 when she decided to follow the example of her daughter, psychologist **Dr. Natasha Kruse** (Los Angeles, CA), and donate a kidney. Natasha had considered living donation for a long time and had conducted her own research before resolving to donate her kidney at age 39. The day of her surgery, the kidney was transplanted into a 26-year-old man at UCLA. Her mother was in the waiting room and accidently met the family of her recipient. Reenie was so overwhelmed that she decided she could become a donor, too, despite being 70 at the time of her donation in May 2013. In so doing, she became the oldest living donor in the U.S. Both Reenie and Natasha will walk alongside this year’s float.

Another plus-70 year old walker is **Rev. Jin-Tak Park** (La Mirada, CA), now 79, who became an altruistic donor in Korea in his early 50’s. Reverend Park was a long-time supporter of blood donation in Korea, and he learned of organ, eye, and tissue donation after immigrating to the U.S. in 1991. Inspired by a Korean-American family who donated their loved one’s organs, Reverend Park returned to Korea to found the Korea Organ Donor Program (KODP). He then donated his kidney altruistically. Through KODP and Park’s work in Korea and the U.S., some 3,000 people have received the gift of life. He remains a healthy advocate of donation.

**Laurie LoMonaco** (Brockport, NY) is another donor who did so simply because she could. In 2010, after

seeing a story on television about an altruistic donor, Laurie went on to spend two years researching living

donation. She donated to a man she had only met once more than a decade earlier. She shared her story with a close friend, Paul M. Guyette, who was inspired by her gift. Paul passed away and became a donor at age 42, and Laurie will now walk alongside the float, which will carry Paul’s floragraph.

For **Richard Glover** (Santa Ana, CA), giving came naturally to him as a man of faith. In 2009, Richard and his wife Julie visited her close friend, Stacy, whose husband Bill was suffering from kidney disease. His condition worsened and Richard prayed for him to survive one day longer. When he did, Richard decided that Bill could use his kidney. The transplant occurred on July 14, 2010 and both Bill and Richard are living healthy lives today.

**JoAnne Burka** (Charleston, WVA) had told her best friend of 40 years, Dawn Gallo, that she would give her a kidney to help her struggles with lupus. Unfortunately, she was not a match, and Dawn finally succumbed to her disease in December 2011. JoAnne never forgot Dawn’s need, and decided at age 50 to donate her kidney altruistically in Dawn’s name. After making the donation, JoAnne recovered swiftly and was even able to complete a 12-mile run only four months later. Today, she uses her positive experience as a living donor to inspire others.

Another friend benefitted from the generosity of **Frances Griffith** (West Fork, AR), when she heard her good friend Linda Weaver had to go on the transplant waiting list. Frances met with the transplant coordinator and went home to tell her husband “I knew I was the one.” The transplant was made successfully on August 9, 2011, when Frances was 51. Today, she and Linda spend as much time together as possible and participate in the Transplant Games and other donor family support activities. They’ll be together on New Year’s Day, as well – as Frances walks the five-mile route, Linda will ride the float proudly beside her. “The donation experience has enriched my life beyond words,” Frances confirmed.

Some living donors do so to help family members. **Bill Cordova Martinez** (Lynwood, CA) is a man who has dedicated his life to helping others. Bill donated his kidney to give his beloved sister, Marianne, another 12 years of life. In 2000, Marianne was diagnosed with kidney disease; the entire family was concerned about the many years she would likely spend on dialysis as she waited for a kidney on the transplant list. Bill took over and gave her the gift of life in 2011. Bill’s gift lasted until June 4, 2013, when Marianne suffered a fatal accident. Bill is still there for his niece, Kelly, and brother-in-law, Jerry.

Another donor who helped a family member to live a normal life is **Carla Cochran** (Albia, IA) who helped her beloved son, Ted who was in end-stage renal failure at age 27. Ted had been born with a blockage at the neck of his bladder which affected his kidneys. He had multiple surgeries as an infant and lived normally until his late 20’s. Carla stepped up as his match. Ted was so grateful that he established the “My Angel Foundation” to help spread awareness of donation in Iowa. Every year on his transplant anniversary, Carla receives a beautiful bouquet of roses from the son she saved.

**Kjersti Cote (**Kalispell, MT) grew up not knowing her biological father, John, until she was 24. He had suffered for a number of years after a venomous brown recluse spider bite. By August 2004, he was so ill he needed a kidney transplant. Kjersti knew “deep in my heart that I was his donor, and that this was just one mission that I was to fulfill on earth.” It turned out she was the only family member tested who could be a match. On February 1, 2005, Kjersti saved her father’s life by willingly donating her kidney.

**Cheryl Manley** (Tulsa, OK) lived through the worst a mother can endure. When traveling home from church in November 1996, Cheryl’s oldest daughters were in a terrible traffic accident. Amanda succumbed to her

injuries and was able to donate her heart to Bonnie, a woman who had put out a prayer request for a heart. Cheryl and Bonnie spoke many times regarding donation. Cheryl has worked as a donation advocate since Amanda’s gifts of life. In 2002, she met a donor mom named Stephanie; the two families became close. Earlier this year, Stephanie told Cheryl her kidneys were failing. Now Cheryl will be able to donate her

kidney to Stephanie on Oct. 16, 2014. A few months later, Cheryl will walk beside the float depicting the floragraph of the daughter she lost, Amanda Philpott.

Each year, about one-third of the nearly 17,000 kidney transplants nationwide involve living donors. The recipients are mostly family and close friends of the donors, but increasingly often altruistic donors step forward to donate to a stranger, with the potential to start a chain of kidney transplants that can potentially free dozens of kidney patients from dialysis. Because the conditions allowing deceased donation to occur are extremely rare, increasing living donation is essential to helping the nearly 100,000 individuals currently awaiting kidney transplants. Living donors also account for about four percent of liver transplants.

The 2015 Donate Life Rose Parade Float, themed **“The Never-Ending Story,”** features 60 beautiful butterflies emerging from an open book. The butterflies ascend above 72 books adorned with floragraph portraits of deceased donors whose legacies are nurtured by their loved ones. Walking alongside the float will be the 12 living organ donors described here. Seated among thousands of dedicated roses are 30 riders representing transplant recipients who celebrate the new chapters of their lives made possible only by the generosity of donors.

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** (Orange, CA), 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 2015 Donate Life float is built by Phoenix Decorating Company from a design by Dave Pittman and is coordinated by OneLegacy, the nation’s largest organ, eye and tissue recovery organization, and the [OneLegacy Foundation](http://www.OneLegacyFoundation.org). Each year, the Donate Life float campaign is supported by more than 140 official sponsors from coast to coast, including organ and tissue recovery organizations, tissue and eye banks, hospitals, transplant centers, state donor registries, funeral homes, donor family foundations and affiliated organizations. Joining OneLegacy as top-level benefactors are the [American Association of Tissue Banks (AATB)](http://www.aatb.org/); [Bridge to Life, Ltd.](http://www.bridgetolifesolutions.com/); the [Dignity Memorial®](http://www.dignitymemorial.com/dm20/en_US/main/dm/index.page) network; [Donate Life America](http://www.DonateLifeAmerica.org/); [Finger Lakes Donor Recovery Network](http://www.donorrecovery.org/) & [University of Rochester Medical Center](https://www.urmc.rochester.edu); [Iowa Donor Network](http://www.iowadonornetwork.org/); [The Order of St. Lazarus](http://www.st-lazarus.us/); [Ryan Viator's Legacy](http://www.donatelifefloat.org/prod/components/media_center/floragraphs/rviator.html); [TBI/Tissue Banks International](http://www.tbionline.org/), and Webco Mining, Inc.

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 126th Rose Parade presented by Honda, themed "Inspiring Stories," will take place Thursday, Jan. 1, 2015, at 8 a.m. (PST) featuring majestic floral floats, high-stepping equestrian units and spirited marching bands. For additional information on the Tournament of Roses please visit the official website at [www.tournamentofroses.com](http://www.tournamentofroses.com/).

For more information on the Donate Life Float and all of the Living Donor Walkers, please visit [www.donatelifefloat.org](http://www.donatelifefloat.org).

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(Note to editors: Full list of walkers and story capsules follows)**Donate Life Rose Parade® Float**

**2015 Float Walkers**

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| **Name** | **Relationship to Donation** | **Age** | **Hometown** | **Occupation** | **Sponsored by** |
| **JOANNE BURKA** | Living Kidney Donor | 53 | Charleston, WVA | Office Sales Operations Manager, Xerox | CORE |
| ***Her story:*** | JoAnne Burka and Dawn Gallo had been friends for 40 years. When Dawn was a high school senior, she began a lifelong struggle with lupus, an autoimmune disease that affected her kidney and heart. Twenty-six years later, Joanne had wanted to give Dawn a kidney, but they weren’t a match and the local kidney exchange never took place. When Dawn’s struggles finally ended with her peaceful passing in December 2011, 50-year-old JoAnne decided to give the gift of life in Dawn’s name. “When life gets crazy, I look at the scar and remember what really matters: I was able to save a life,” she reflected. JoAnne now uses her living donor experience to inspire others to become donors. |
| **Carla COCHRAN** | Living Kidney Donor |  60  | Albia, IA | Registered Nurse | Iowa Donor Network |
| ***Her story:*** | Carla Cochran discovered that her 18-month-old son Ted had been born with a blockage at the neck of his bladder; his kidneys were only half-functioning. After multiple surgeries, Ted was able to grow up and live a normal life until age 27, when he experienced end-stage renal failure. He needed a transplant, and Carla was a match. The successful surgeries took place on August 29, 2006. Ted was so inspired that he set up My Angel Foundation to help spread awareness of donation in their state. And every year on his transplant anniversary, he sends a bouquet of roses to his mother for giving him back his life.  |
| **KJERSTI COTE** | Living Kidney Donor | 39 | Kalispell, MT | Coordinator of Audio Education, IsaGenix and Health Coach | Bacterin International |
| ***Her story:*** | Kjersti Cote grew up not knowing her biological father, John. They met when she was 24. After he was bit by a venomous brown recluse spider in 1998, he developed health problems that gradually worsened. By August 2004, he was so ill that he needed a kidney transplant. Kjersti knew “deep in my heart that I was his donor, and that this was just one mission that I was to fulfill on earth.” After testing it was determined that Kjersti was the only match in the family who could donate. On February 1, 2005, just 23 days after John was placed on the transplant list, Kjersti donated her kidney and saved her father’s life.  |
| **Maureen “Reenie” Harris** | Living Kidney Donor | 72 | Cedar Knolls, NJ | Retired | Donate Life Rose Parade Float Committee |
| ***Her story:*** | Maureen “Reenie” Harris has been a caring person from a young age. After her daughter, Dr. Natasha Kruse, donated a kidney altruistically, it came as no surprise, when at age 70, Reenie decided to donate her kidney anonymously and became the oldest living donor in the U.S. When asked why she would donate to a stranger, she said, “I’ve enjoyed good health and keen awareness. Throughout my life I’ve been given many opportunities to connect with people in ways I never could have imagined. The heartfelt connections in each case were unexpected gifts. My answer when asked WHY I donated is WHY NOT!”  |
| **RICHARD GLOVER** | Living Kidney Donor | 51 | Santa Ana, CA | Water Equipment Operator | OneLegacy |
| ***His story:*** | Richard and Julie Glover have always been giving people. In 2009, they went on vacation to visit Julie’s friend Stacy and her husband Bill, who had been suffering from kidney disease. Richard was struck by the severity of his illness. In early 2010, Bill was rushed to the hospital and was not expected to make it through the night. Richard prayed for him, and when Bill survived, Richard decided to donate his kidney to Bill. The transplant occurred on July 14, 2010. Richard found later that their journey “has touched his family, friends, and community, as well as blessing me by sharing the story of my living donor journey to thousands of people as a Donate Life Ambassador.”  |

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| **Frances Griffith** | Living Kidney Donor | 54 | West Fork, AR | Civil Engineer | Webco Mining, Inc.  |
| ***Her story:*** | In 2011, Frances Griffith received an email from her longtime friend and colleague Linda Weaver that she was being placed on the transplant waiting list. “After visiting with the transplant coordinator at Baptist Hospital, I went home that evening and told my husband that I knew I was the one”, Frances said. The transplant was made successfully on August 9, 2011, when Frances was 51. Today she and Linda spend as much time together as possible, and Frances serves on the Arkansas Donor Family Council. “The joy I get in seeing Linda be able to live a more healthy life, free from dialysis, has made it all worthwhile,” Frances explained, “and the donation experience has enriched my life beyond words.” |
| **NATASHA KRUSE** | Living Kidney Donor | 42 | Los Angeles, CA | Psychologist | UCLA |
| ***Her story:*** | In June 2012, Natasha Kruse was 39 when she donated her kidney altruistically through a kidney exchange program to a young man at UCLA. After years of research, she knew she was ready. “I thought to myself, I’m healthy and this feels like a very natural way for me to give to someone in need,” said Natasha, a psychologist. Natasha’s mother, Reenie Harris, was at the hospital when Natasha donated her kidney and accidentally met her daughter’s recipient family. Reenie was so moved by the experience that she decided to become an altruistic donor, as well. Mother and daughter will walk together alongside the float to inspire others to save lives through living donation.  |
| **Laurie LoMonaco**  | Living Kidney Donor | 50 | Brockport, NY | Paralegal | Finger Lakes Donor Recovery Network/University of Rochester Medical Center/Strong Memorial Hospital |
| ***Her story:*** | In early 2010, Laurie Lo Monaco was watching a television show about a man who had donated a kidney altruistically. Her first thought was, “I can do that!” After two years of researching living organ donation and a year of testing, Laurie donated her kidney to a man she had only met once, over a decade ago, who was very ill and on dialysis. She said later that it had been easier to do the surgery than it was to tell friends and loved ones her plan. She did share her story with Paul Guyette, who was inspired by her gift. Paul became a donor at 42, and his floragraph will be on the float as Laurie walks alongside on New Year’s Day. |
| **Cheryl Manley** | Living Kidney Donor | 59 | Tulsa, OK | Registered Senior Client Associate | LifeShare of Oklahoma |
| ***Her story:*** | Cheryl Manley’s transplant story began in November 1996 when her family was returning from church. Her three daughters were in a separate car and wound up in a terrible accident. Amanda later succumbed to her injuries and became an organ and tissue donor. Since Amanda’s donation, Cheryl has worked as a donation advocate and in 2002 she met a donor mom named Stephanie. The two families became close; earlier this year, Stephanie told Cheryl her kidneys were failing. Now Cheryl will be able to donate her kidney to Stephanie on Oct. 16, 2014. A few months later, Cheryl will walk beside the float and the floragraph of Amanda Philpott, the daughter she lost but whose gifts have helped so many others.  |
| **Bill Cordova Martinez** | Living Kidney Donor | 56 | Lynwood, CA  | Emergency Services Coordinator for the State of California | Friends of Marianne O'Quinn |
| ***His story:*** | Bill Cordova Martinez has dedicated his life to helping others. He grew up in a loving family with twin brothers and a younger sister, Marianne, with whom he developed a close bond. Their bond grew even stronger as they grew up. When Bill heard Marianne had kidney disease and would have to wait a long time for a new kidney, he gave her one of his. Marianne was able to carry on for 12 more years with Bill’s kidney until she passed away on June 4, 2013, from a fatal accident. Throughout that time, Bill continued to show the unconditional love and courage that had come to define him. |
|  **REV. Jin-Tak Park** | Living Kidney Donor | 79 | La Mirada, CA | Chaplain | Korean Organ Donor Program |
| ***His story:*** | Rev. Jin-Tak Park began his multi- decade work of promoting organ donation almost by chance. He believed in blood donation and had promoted it in Seoul, Korea, where he was born. After moving to Los Angeles in 1991, he met a Korean-American family whose father had been declared brain dead from an accident. The family wanted to donate his organs “for the sake of love.” Inspired by this act, Rev. Park returned to Korea and established the Korea Organ Donor Program (KODP). He then donated his own kidney altruistically. “I served at the pleasure of God and the reward of letting me live a healthy and happy life for 50 years,” Rev. Park recalled. Thanks to KODP and Rev. Park, some 3,000 people have received the gift of life, and Rev. Park remains a healthy advocate of donation.  |