**For Immediate Release**

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# 30 RIDERS TO SHARE *‘THE NEVER-ENDING STORY’*

# ABOARD THE 12TH ANNUAL DONATE LIFE ROSE PARADE® FLOAT

# Green Bay Packers Hall of Famer and Kidney Recipient John Brockington to Ride with

**Former NHL Player and Heart Recipient Gates Orlando**

**LOS ANGELES, Calif.** – **Oct. 21, 2014** – The 30 individuals selected to ride the 12th annual **Donate Life float in the 2015 Rose Parade** have unique yet unifying stories that become part of **“The Never-Ending Story,”** the theme of this year’s float. The majority of the riders are organ and tissue recipients joined by four donor mothers whose sons and daughters saved lives with their selfless gifts of life.

This year’s float 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 celebrated by their loved ones. Walking alongside the float will be 12 living organ donors, four of whom have ties with the float riders, who will be seated among thousands of dedicated roses.

“We are delighted to welcome the 12th class of riders to the Donate Life float,” stated 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. “Each of their lives tells a story of hope that is realized by someone whose commitment to organ and tissue donation made their lives whole again. These recipients ride with four donor mothers whose children enabled others, like the riders around them, to live. With nearly 124,000 people on the national transplant waiting list, these personal stories of the reaffirming power of donation and transplantation are shared to inspire all of us to choose to Donate Life – and remind us that ours is a shared and never-ending story.”

While all the riders represent a broad spectrum of backgrounds and ages ranging from 17 to 77, none are more recognizable than professional athletes **John Brockington** (San Diego, CA), and **Gaetano “Gates” Orlando** (Victor, NY). Brockington, a former Green Bay Packers running back who was entered into the team’s Hall of Fame in 1984, received a kidney from a longtime Packers fan, **Diane Scott**. The two met in a local deli in San Diego, where Diane would go to grade her college students’ papers. When she heard that the athlete she loved to watch in Wisconsin needed a kidney to survive, she and her daughters offered theirs. John and Diane were a match in more ways than one and married after a decade of friendship. Today, the Brockingtons direct the John Brockington Foundation to increase organ donation and raise funds for those on dialysis. The two have received numerous awards and serve on the board of directors for Donate Life America. On New Year’s Day, while John rides the float, his donor wife Diane will walk alongside him to demonstrate the value of living donors in saving those with kidney and liver failure.

In another part of the country, Gates Orlando was famed as a longtime NHL player of the Buffalo Sabres and now a talent scout for the New Jersey Devils. In 2011, Gates was diagnosed with sarcoidosis, a rare form of heart failure. Two years later, he received the heart he needed so badly from **Paul M. Guyette**, a local electrician with two daughters, who had passed away at age 42. Guyette was a lifelong Sabres fan who never missed a game. At the time of the donation, Paul’s family had no idea who would benefit from his selfless gift of life, yet in hindsight they think his heart’s destination was meant to be. Now Orlando speaks at events with Paul’s wife, Mary, as they share their story of inspiration. Their story will continue as Orlando rides the float near Paul’s floragraph, and **Laurie LoMonaco,** Paul’s friend and an altruistic donor who inspired him to donate, walks alongside.

Three other athletic riders are heart recipient **Joe DiSanto** (Hillsborough, NJ); and **Jake Doud** (Firestone, CO), and **Colin Lepley** (Versailles, MO), both of whom required donor tissue to regain their ability to play sports. Joe loved playing basketball and football and was shocked to find at age 11 that he had an enlarged heart. He went into cardiac arrest 10 months later and spent three months in Intensive Care before he was strong enough to withstand a transplant. He received his heart on July 8, 2006 and now wins medals in the Transplant Games. A college student at age 20, Joe noted that “There are over 120,000 people on the waiting list in America. It is my mission to bring that number down so that others can get a second chance like I did.”

For Jake, a teen who had excelled in all sports, knee pain was putting him on the bench. At 15, he was diagnosed with Osteochondritis dissecans, a joint condition in which cartilage and bone in the knee become loose. With the help of donated cartilage and bone allografts, Jake’s doctor was able to replace the damaged tissue and realign the weight-bearing line in Jake’s leg. Now 18 and signed up as donor, Jake has “felt the impact of what it really means to receive something from someone you don’t know.”

Like Jake, Colin had played competitive sports since he was in pre-school. An outstanding football and baseball player, he injured his knee sliding into second base. On January 24, 2013, he received a donor allograft tissue transplant to restore his hope of playing sports again. Inspired by his donor’s gift, Colin plans to go into the physical therapy field so that he can help others to heal. Colin reached out to the family of his donor, **Mike Erickson** (Dorchester, WI), who was only 28 when he died and donated his organs, corneas, and tissue. On New Year’s Day, Colin will ride the float with Mike’s floragraph.

The youngest and oldest of this year’s riders are six decades apart. At 17, **Naomi F. Kurlowich** (Columbia, SC), is also the only rider in the float’s history with Down Syndrome. Naomi has never let her condition dampen her dreams, however, and she has been an active athlete from an early age. Unfortunately, children with Down Syndrome have a genetic predisposition to orthopedic problems such as joint instability. Naomi began experiencing severe knee pain at eight, and by 15 she was wheelchair bound. The only solution was to transplant tissue from two donors to stabilize her knees. “Two years later, it still makes my heart sing to watch her run exuberantly around a ball field and up and down a basketball court,” said her mother, Carol Kurlowich.

At age 77, **Dr. Phil Berry** (Dallas, TX) is the oldest rider. He is still performing life-saving orthopedic surgeries, enhancing the lives of thousands of patients, and helping his colleagues sign up to become donors. Earlier in his life, Phil had contracted Hepatitis B from a cut during surgery, and his liver worsened to the extent that he could only survive with a transplant. At 49, he was able to receive a liver from a young woman who had suffered an aneurysm. Today, Phil is the longest surviving liver recipient in the state of Texas.

Three riders are alive today because of lung donations from both deceased and living donors. **Bree Ahnne Bowers** (Chino, CA), **Courtney Nichols** (Hendersonville, TN), and **Michael Adams** (Oceanside, CA) suffered from cystic fibrosis (CF), a chronic, life-threatening lung disorder that is often passed down in families. In Courtney’s case, she was diagnosed at 14 and given no more than seven years to live. She survived until 31 when she received the gift of life. Now 34, she has a full life with her husband and daughter and has been able to meet and spend time with the family of her donor, 19-year-old Matthew, in whose memory she will ride.

Bree Ahnne also suffered from CF almost from the time she was born. Her parents helped her stay as healthy as possible as she balanced her life with many after-school activities. However, the CF took its toll and by the time she graduated high school she had lost more than half of her lung capacity. She spent two years on the transplant list when her doctor suggested that a transplant of lung lobe tissue might be possible from living donors. Her father and sister, Mike and Amber, both qualified, and Bree received a lung lobe from each of them in 2011. Now 25, she has completed college, hiked in Maui, and can work part-time. “This life is a gift from God, and I intend to treasure it,” she said emphatically.

Michael was down to 17 percent lung function on Thanksgiving in 2002. He went to the emergency room that night because “I didn’t want to die at home.” On December 6, he finally received the call he thought would come too late, and he received two lungs from15-year-old Tory Howe Lynch, who was gunned down while waiting for choir practice on church steps. Michael met Tory’s mother a year after the transplant, and they have developed a deep bond. They meet for lunch every December 6, their mutual anniversaries.

Donors and their families, like those who made such a difference in the lives described here, are represented by four float riders: **Amy Johnson** (Englewood, CO); **Jackie Pische** (Gillett, WI); **Kathy Forti**  (Youngstown, NY); and **Mary Louise Smith** (Warrminster, PA). Mary Louise has met two of her son Eric’s recipients, while Amy was able to meet all three of her daughter Nicole’s organ recipients. “I have learned a lot. Comfort can come from tragedy,” Amy shared. “One family’s loss can help other families grow. Just because someone is gone doesn’t mean they’ll be forgotten.” That is certainly true for Jackie, who is not only a donor mother but also a recipient of her son Josh’s tissue, which was used to help Jackie achieve a successful spinal procedure.

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.

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). Further information about the Donate Life float, decorating, and dedication garden can be found at [www.donatelifefloat.org](http://www.donatelifefloat.org).

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

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(Note to editors: Full list of riders and story capsules follows)

**Donate Life Rose Parade® Float**

**2015 Float Riders**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Relationship to Donation** | **Age** | **Hometown** | **Occupation** | **Sponsored by** |
| **Michael adams** | Double Lung Recipient | 51 | Oceanside, CA |  Student | Cedars-Sinai Comprehensive Transplant Center |
| ***His story:*** | On Thanksgiving eve 2002, Michael Adams sat in a recliner with an oxygen cannula in his nose, receiving eight liters of oxygen and gasping for air. With only 17 percent lung function, he had end-stage cystic fibrosis. That night he was admitted to the hospital because he didn’t want to die at home. On December 5, his pastor read him his last rites. The next morning, he received the call that he had waited for more than two years – a pair of lungs was now available. Since then, Michael has traveled all over the world, enjoys kayaking and playing tennis. He participated in the 2004 U.S Transplant games, medaling in men's tennis. He has a deep bond with the mother of his organ donor, Tory Howe Lynch, a 15-year-old boy who was gunned down while waiting for choir practice on the church steps.  |
| **DR. PHIL BERRY** | Liver Recipient | 77 | Dallas, TX | Orthopedic Surgeon | Donate Life Texas |
| ***His story:*** | In the early 1980s, Dr. Phil Berry, a Dallas surgeon, contracted hepatitis B from a cut in the operating room. As his condition worsened, he needed a liver transplant to stay alive. On October 26, 1987, he received the liver of a 30-year-old woman who had died suddenly of an aneurysm. Dr. Berry was back operating only two months later and has continued operating to this day. He has also become a passionate advocate for donation. While president of the Texas Medical Association in 1997, Dr. Berry selected organ donation as TMA’s area of focus for the year. He spoke to 30 - 40 county medical societies about organ donation; all of TMA’s doctors signed donor cards that year. Dr. Barry remains one of the longest surviving liver transplant recipients in Texas. |
| **TIM BISHOP** | Kidney Recipient | 41 | Stilwell, OK | Student | Cytonet in partnership with LifeShare Oklahoma |
| ***His story:*** | In September 1999, Tim Bishop, was healthy, active and athletic.  At 26, he had recently married, and he and his wife were about to have a baby. On September 11, Plizia Marie was born.  That same day was quickly overshadowed when Tim was admitted to the hospital with severe fluid retention, a condition he had been battling for a year. As Tim became more ill, he suffered from fluid retention throughout his body and was diagnosed with nephritic syndrome, a kidney disease. In 2002, he was put on peritoneal dialysis and put on the transplant waiting list. On October 16, 2004, he received his new kidney. Now 41, Tim, a member of the Osage Nation Tribe, encourages other Native American communities to learn more about donation. “I want the Native American communities to be aware of transplantation as an option in healthcare,” he said. |
| **BREE AHNNE BOWERS** | Lung (Lobes) Recipient | 25 | Chino, CA | Replenishment Associate | OneLegacy |
| ***Her story:***  | Before Bree Ahnne Bowers was one year old, she was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis (CF). Her parents made sure that she led a relatively normal life with many after-school activities to balance her daily medical regimes. But CF still took a toll on her lungs. By the time Bree graduated from high school in 2007, her lung function had decreased to 54 percent. In November 2009, she was put on the waiting list for a lung transplant. Two years later, she opted for new lung lobes via living donors. Her father and her sister, Amber, qualified to be Bree’s living donors and on December 15, 2011, Bree was given a second chance at life. She graduated from college in 2013. Today Bree also runs, hikes, and works part-time. “This life is a gift from God,” she said. “I intend to treasure it.” |
| **JOHN BROCKINGTON** | Kidney Recipient | 66 | San Diego, CA | Green Bay Packers Hall of Famer  | Donate Life America |
| ***His story:*** | An All-American running back at The Ohio State University, John Brockington was part of the team that won the National Championship in the 1968 Rose Bowl. He then became the Green Bay Packers' first pick in the 1971 NFL draft, breaking records as a running back. In 1984, John was accepted into the Packers Hall of Fame. After moving to San Diego, John became friends with long-time Packers fan, Diane Scott, a college professor. When John suffered kidney failure in 2000, Diane offered to become his donor and on November 28, 2001, Diane, at 5’2” donated her kidney to her 6’1” friend. They married shortly after. Together, they direct the John Brockington Foundation to increase organ donation and raise funds for pre- and post-transplant patients. John is also on the board of directors of Donate Life America, and on the advisory boards of both Explore Transplant and Lifesharing. On New Year’s Day, John will ride the float next to his donor and wife, Diane, who will walk alongside with 11 other living donors.  |
| **MONICA ELAINE BROWN** | Kidney Recipient | 51 | Springfield, MO | Home Health Care Aide | Mid-America Transplant Services |
| ***Her story:*** | In 2005, Monica Brown began experiencing flu-like symptoms and was in and out of the hospital for the next two years. She was finally diagnosed with lupus and high blood pressure, which eventually caused end-stage kidney disease and required dialysis. As it happened, Monica had been working in a dialysis unit for 10 years, so she was very familiar with kidney disease and the process. On August 9, 2012, she received her new kidney. The following year, Monica and her husband attended a candlelight memorial ceremony to honor her donor and celebrate the wonderful gift she had been given. There, by accident, she met the mother of Abby Cecena, her donor. Monica will ride on the Donate Life float near Abby’s floragraph. |
| **TED COCHRAN** | Kidney Recipient | 35 | Waukee, IA | GM | Iowa Donor Network |
| ***His story:*** | At age 1-1/2, Ted Cochran needed surgery for bladder blockage. But Ted’s kidneys had sustained permanent damage; he was diagnosed with chronic kidney disease. He endured multiple major surgeries and spent many weeks in the hospital. When Ted was 19, he suddenly became extremely ill and went into septic shock, causing further damage to his kidneys that progressed into end-stage kidney disease and the need for a transplant. Ted’s mother, Carla Cochran, was a match and donated her kidney to her son. “On August 29, 2006, I received the most loving, compassionate, and selfless gift from my mother, the ‘Gift of Life’ by way of a kidney transplant,” he said. In gratitude, Ted created the My Angel Foundation to inspire Iowans to become registered donors. On New Year’s Day, as Ted rides the float, his donor, Carla, will walk proudly alongside.  |
| **JAZMYN N. CREASON** | Liver Recipient | 21 | Sahuarita, AZ | Student | Donor Network of Arizona |
| ***Her story:*** | Jazmyn N. Creason was a healthy 16-year-old student and athlete looking forward to graduating from high school a year early with plans to become an attorney. But, out of the blue, she had an intense pain in her side during softball practice and was diagnosed with Caroli disease, a rare liver condition. For the next year, Jazmyn traveled to six children’s hospitals looking for answers as her condition worsened. A transplant became her only option and on February 13, 2011, Jazmyn received her new liver. Jazmyn’s donor was an 18-year-old boy from California who was killed in a car accident and whose organs saved Jazmyn’s life as well as the lives of seven others. Now, more than three years later, Jazmyn is 21 and helping others with “Jazmyn’s Lunch Break,” which offers respites for parents of chronically ill children. |
| **JOE DISANTO** | Heart Recipient | 20 | Hillsborough, NJ | Students | New Jersey Sharing Network |
| ***His story:*** | When Joe DiSanto was 11 years old, he was diagnosed with an enlarged heart. After the diagnosis, he had to give up all competitive sports and start taking heart medications. Several months later, he went into cardiac arrest and was told that he needed a heart transplant. On July 8, 2006, he was given a second chance at life. Six years later, he met his donor’s mother. Since his transplant, Joe has participated in the Transplant Games, which have brought sports back into his life. Joe and his family now volunteer with the New Jersey Sharing Network to spread the word about organ donation.  |
| **JAKE DOUD** | Cartilage and Bone Allograft Recipient | 18 | Firestone, CO | Student | AlloSource |
| ***His story:*** | Jake Doud’s life was never without sport: as one season ended, another began. Soccer became basketball, basketball became track, and he enjoyed the athletic challenge of each sport. However, constant knee pain threatened to put him on the bench. After diagnosing him with osteochondritis dissecans, Jake’s doctor used bone and cartilage allografts to replace the damaged tissue in his knee. Jake understood prior to his surgery that a deceased tissue donor made the bone and cartilage allografts possible. “My immediate reaction was sadness,” he revealed. “Today I am very appreciative that the person chose to be a donor and wanted to help someone beyond their own life.” |
| **CLARE DOWLING** | Double Lung Recipient | 23 | Danville, CA | Student | Donate Life Run/Walk Committee |
| ***Her story:*** | While attending college in 2009, Clare Dowling, then 18, noticed that she was short of breath when walking from class to class. She was diagnosed with pulmonary veno-oclusive disease (PVOD) and in need of a double-lung transplant. As Clare’s health rapidly declined, she was put on the organ transplant waitlist in April 2010 and received her new lungs on August 26.While Clare does not know the identity of her donor, she honors him/her by always living her life to the fullest. She has been able to get back to her lifelong passion of horseback riding and has gone back to school where she is a college senior studying sociology. Clare does her best to take care of her new lungs and renewed health.  |
| **SHARI LYNN ENGLAND** | Liver Recipient | 55 | Medford, OK | Writer, Artist | LifeShare Oklahoma |
| ***Her story:*** | In 1997, Shari Lynn England was a 37-year-old busy wife and mother of three; she was also youth director at her church and worked full-time. Shari began to notice how fatigued she was feeling. After many tests, she was diagnosed with moderate-to-severe cirrhosis brought about over a period of many years by an unsuspected autoimmune disorder. The signs had been virtually undetectable. It was too late for the liver to heal itself and too late for medication, as well. Shari’s doctor estimated her liver would last no more than four years – a liver transplant was her only chance of survival. In 1999, Shari was put on the waiting list. Eighteen months later, on August 7, 2001, she received her new liver. Upon examining her damaged liver, the doctor estimated she would not have survived two more weeks. |
| **ALMA LILIANA FELIZ** | Heart Recipient | 34 | Irvine, CA | Claims Adjuster | Loma Linda University Medical Center |
| ***Her story:*** | In 1989, nine-year-old Alma Liliana Feliz was diagnosed with cardiomyopathy. She experienced chest pain often as her condition worsened. On February 2, 1992, she received her first heart transplant. During the next 14 years she led a normal life. In December 2004, Alma began to feel chest pain again and was diagnosed with coronary artery disease, a common, long-term side effect of some of her medication. Because she had already had a heart transplant, her only option for treatment was another heart transplant. “I was given another chance to live,” Alma said. “I am so thankful and still to this day cannot believe I have had two heart transplants.” |
| **KATHY FORTI** | Donor Mother | 47 | Youngstown, NY | Homemaker | Unyts |
| ***Her story:*** | As a single mother of three, Kathy Forti had a particularly close relationship with her eldest son, Tommy Burley. She taught him to play baseball and stood by his side when he was nominated to be in the Little League Baseball Hall of Fame. An “old soul,” Tommy would care for his mother through two autoimmune disorders. When he was getting his driver’s license, Kathy brought up the topic of organ and tissue donation and was surprised when Tommy said that he had already made the decision to register. Tommy joined the U.S. Air Force Reserves and become a volunteer firefighter, all by the age of 20. On June 18, 2013, Tommy was in a fatal motorcycle accident on his way home from firefighter training. Grief-stricken, Kathy was unable to face many of the difficult decisions that would follow. But one thing was certain: Tommy would be a donor.  |
| **GILDA GOPAL** | Kidney Recipient | 47 | Daly City, CA | Sales Associate | California Transplant Donor Network  |
| ***Her story:*** | In 2002, at age 35, Philippines native Gilda Gopal was living in the Bay Area and working in a home improvement store. Until then, she had always enjoyed good health, but was now bothered by a cough and fatigue. When she finally went to a doctor, the news was devastating – she was in renal failure and was immediately sent to the ER, where she was put on dialysis. Because she needed regular treatments, she and her husband, Raj, could not travel much and the rigors of dialysis left her drained. “After each session, I wanted to sleep all day, but I had to work full time,” she said. Four years later, Gilda’s life was restored thanks to a kidney donor. Now Gilda and Raj volunteer as Donate Life Ambassadors for the California Transplant Donor Network.  |
| **PAULINA GUEVARA** | Kidney Recipient | 23 | Los Angeles, CA | Student | OneLegacy |
| ***Her story:*** | In 2005, at age 13, Paulina Guevara was diagnosed with end-stage renal disease. For two years, she was on medications, but then went into kidney failure. She began dialysis immediately and was placed on the transplant waiting list. After nearly four years on dialysis, Paulina, then 19, received her transplant on February 19, 2010. During this time, her father’s kidneys also began to fail. He died in October 2011 and became a tissue donor. Paulina and her mother are now Spanish-speaking volunteers for OneLegacy and share their experiences and the benefits of donation with the Latino community.  |
| **AMY JOHNSON** | Donor Mother | 58 | Englewood, CO | Court Judicial Assistant | Donor Alliance |
| ***Her story:*** | Amy Johnson’s daughter, Nicole Scott, was a vivacious, passionate 15-year-old who never met a stranger and enjoyed the role of social coordinator among her friends. A gifted athlete, Nicole was involved in a fatal car accident on June 4, 2001. Amidst the devastation of losing a child, Amy knew that her generous daughter would do anything to help someone in need and agreed to organ donation. Thanks to Nicole’s gifts, three people were given a second chance at life. Amy has met all three and has formed a bond with each: a Utah woman who received Nicole’s heart; a Colorado man who received Nicole’s liver; and a New York woman who received Nicole’s kidney.  |
| **NAOMI F. KURLOWICH** | Allograft Recipient | 17 | Columbia, SC | Student | Musculoskeletal Transplant Foundation |
| ***Her story:*** | Diagnosed at birth with Down Syndrome, Naomi Kurlowich never let it slow her down, from playing on a local softball team for children with developmental challenges, to being a physically active student at school. But Naomi began to experience severe knee pain. Children with Down Syndrome have a genetic predisposition to suffering from orthopedic problems like joint instability. When she was eight, Naomi began to experience painful dislocations of her kneecaps. By 15, she was wheelchair-bound. As Naomi’s ligaments were too weak to reconstruct, she had surgery to repair her knees using donated tissue. Now 17, Naomi has a new lease on life and is playing ball through the generosity of two tissue donors. |
| **COLIN LEPLEY** | Allograft Recipient | 20 | Versailles, MO | Student | RTI Donor Services |
| ***His story:*** | Colin Lepley has played competitive sports since he was four years old. A star football and baseball player in high school, Colin injured his knee sliding into second base and needed an allograft tissue transplant to repair it. Colin was devastated, but knew he needed the transplant if he was to have any hope of playing sports again. His surgery was January 24, 2013. Colin now plans on being a donor, which is something he had never considered. Inspired by his donor’s gift, Colin plans to go into the physical therapy field so that he can help others to heal. Colin has expressed his deep gratitude to Dorothy Beckman, the mother of his donor, Mike Erickson, who is being honored with a floragraph on the 2015 Donate Life Float. |
| **JIMMY LYNCH** | Kidney and Pancreas Recipient | 51 | Brookhaven, MS | Retired | The Order of Saint Lazarus |
| ***His story:*** | Jimmy Lynch was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes in 1979, at age 16. For many years he struggled to control his blood sugar, but finally went on dialysis in February 2002. Needing a double-organ transplant, Jimmy went to the top of the kidney-pancreas waiting list and was transplanted on June 30, 2002. He resolved to thank his donor family, the Janohoskys, whose son Allen had been Jimmy’s kidney and pancreas donor. The families met at the 2004 Transplant Games and immediately bonded. On New Year’s Day, Jimmy will ride near Allen’s floragraph as part of “The Never-Ending Story.” |
| **KELVIN MARTIN** | Heart Recipient | 35 | Bowlingbrook, IL | DJ | Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network |
| ***His story:*** | In 2005, at age 25, Kelvin Martin was diagnosed with congestive heart failure. After prolonged treatment, he had his first heart attack in 2009. Kelvin graduated from college in 2010 with a BA in criminal justice and was just starting a career in law enforcement when he had a second heart attack. While undergoing a procedure to install a defibrillator and pacemaker, Kelvin had a third heart attack on the surgery table. He was kept in a medically induced coma for two weeks, during which doctors performed emergency life-saving surgery and on July 12, 2011, inserted an LVAD (left ventricular assist device) to take over his heart function while waiting for his transplant. On January 18, 2014, Kelvin, now 35, received his new heart.  |
| **COURTNEY NICHOLS** | Double Lung Recipient | 34 | Hendersonville, TN | Stay at home mom | In Memory of Matthew Morvin |
| ***Her story:*** | In 1994, 14-year-old Courtney Nichols was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis (CF); she was given seven years to live. “My life as I knew it was over,” said Courtney. “Suddenly I was taking medicine, undergoing breathing treatments and chest therapy, and had many doctor visits and hospitalizations.” Courtney’s health continued to deteriorate, and on August 15, 2011, she received a double-lung transplant. “It was like breathing a breath of fresh air all the time.” Before, she was unable to walk a few feet. Since the transplant, she has run a 5K twice. Courtney knew that someone had to pass away in order for her to live, but she came to terms with this, realizing that it was his wish to help others have a longer and better life than he had. In 2013, Courtney and her husband met the family of her 19-year-old donor, Matthew. The two families now have a very close relationship, and she rides the float in Matthew’s memory.  |
| **GAETANO “GATES” ORLANDO** | Heart Recipient | 52 | Victor, NY | Scout for New JerseyDevils (NHL)  | LDRN & URMC/Strong Memorial Hospital |
| ***His story:*** | Gaetano "Gates" Orlando, 52, is a retired NHL hockey player and hockey coach and now a talent scout for the New Jersey Devils. He played professionally for the Buffalo Sabres and the Milano (Italy) Devils. In 2011, Gates was diagnosed with sarcoidosis, a rare form of heart failure. Although he was able to manage his symptoms with medication and medical devices for a time, the disease progressed and he needed a heart transplant.  On February 4, 2013, Gates received a new heart from Paul M. Guyette, 42, an electrician with two children, who loved sports and was a devoted Buffalo Bills and Buffalo Sabres fan. Paul’s family thinks his heart’s destination seems meant to be. Gates and Paul’s wife Mary, tell their stories together often. Gates will ride the float with Paul’s floragraph and Paul’s inspiration, Laurie LoMonaco, walking alongside with 11 living donors.  |
| **SHIRLEY PINCUS** | Nerve Tissue Recipient | 63 | Hampshire, IL | Retired HR Manager | AxoGen, Inc. |
| ***Her story:*** | Shirley Pincus contracted polio at the age of three, leaving her with partial paralysis and atrophied muscles on her lower left leg and foot. Determined not to be defined by the effects of polio, Shirley did everything other people did, including hiking and snowshoeing. About five years ago Shirley began to experience debilitating foot and leg pain. On December 14, 2013, she had surgery to remove damaged nerve tissue from her leg and replace it with a graft of decellularized human nerve tissue that would allow the nerve to regenerate and properly send signals. Now 63, she is no longer plagued by throbbing pain. “Thanks to a donor’s generous donation, I have gotten my life back,” she declared. |
| **JACKIE PISCHE** | Tissue Recipient and Donor Mother | 48 | Gillett, WI | Child Support Agency Director | Medtronic & American Tissue Services Foundation |
| ***Her story:*** | Jackie Pische knew that her son, Joshua Richards, had signed up to be an organ and tissue donor when he received his driver’s license at age 16. On December 8, 2013, 25-year-old Josh was fatally shot in the head. Seven people received Josh’s organs, and many more received his tissue. Only five days before Josh died, Jackie had had spinal surgery to ease her chronic back pain. Unfortunately, her first procedure did not alleviate her symptoms and she needed a second surgery, which required tissue from a donor. Jackie found that Josh’s tissue could be made available to her, and since she completed her second surgery on August 27, 2014, Josh’s giving spirit and tissue have helped to heal his mother’s pain. |
| **GABBY PREAP** | Heart Recipient | 25 | Long Beach, CA  | Pharmacy Technician | VRL Laboratories in partnership with Sierra Donor Services |
| ***Her story:*** | In 2008, Gabby Preap was 17 and had just learned she had a deadly condition - cardiomyopathy. By age 19, she was dying of heart failure and a transplant was her only hope.  In April 2011, Gabby’s life was saved by a 19-year-old donor, Cassie Campbell. "I felt like I was reborn,” Gabby said at the time. On Valentine's Day in 2013, Gabby and her donor’s family united in Roseville, CA to thank nurses and doctors who helped to make the transplant possible. Now 25, Gabby is going strong, and will ride the float beneath her donor’s floragraph.  |
| **JULIA A. REJER** | Liver and Kidney Recipient | 59 | New Palestine, IN | IOPO Volunteer | Donate Life Indiana in partnership with Indiana Organ Procurement Organization |
| ***Her story:*** | As a young wife enjoying an exciting life with two toddlers, Julia A. Rejer began losing weight and was not feeling well. She was diagnosed with primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC), a disease of the bile ducts.  In the face of an illness that could likely kill her in 10 years without a transplant, she decided to do her best to manage her condition.  But she became sicker and in 1996, she was waitlisted for a liver transplant. On January 10, 1997, a year later, she received a new liver. Years passed, and Julia’s PSC returned; she became gravely ill. Once again, she was listed for a liver and a kidney transplant. Julia was blessed with the precious gift of organ donation on February 28, 2008. Although Julia’s illness has been devastating, she also feels that she has been extraordinarily lucky – because two people each made a choice one day to save lives. Now 59, Julia is a dedicated volunteer with the Indiana Organ Procurement Organization. |
| **MARY LOUISE SMITH** | Donor Mother  | 58 | Warminster, PA | Insurance Agent | Gift of Life Donor Program |
| ***Her story:*** | On May 12, 2011, Eric Smith, 23, graduated from Temple University. Exactly one month later, on June 12, he was in a fatal auto accident. On the way to the hospital, his mother, Mary Louise Smith, saw the Gift of Life building. “That’s when I knew,” she said. “We wanted to honor Eric’s wishes and give others the chance that Eric was not able to have.” As a result, many people were given a second chance at life. The 26-year-old man who received Eric’s heart was thrilled to meet his second daughter, while a 54-year-old-man received Eric’s liver. Two people regained their sight with Eric’s corneas. The Smiths met the woman who received Eric’s left kidney and pancreas and the man who received Eric’s right kidney. Mary Louise said that “When meeting the organ recipients, their gratitude entered the room before they did – it was huge.” |
| **ADAM J. TELLER** | Bone Allograft Recipient | 38 | Los Angeles, CA | Donation Development Clinical Specialist, OneLegacy | American Association of Tissue Banks (AATB) |
| ***His story:*** | For the past 11 years, Adam Teller has been a tireless advocate and spokesperson for organ and tissue donation via his positions at OneLegacy, first as a procurement transplant coordinator and now as a donation development clinical specialist. Prior to joining OneLegacy, Adam worked as a certified emergency medical technician for many years. Adam, 38, has a personal connection to donation. One day, while playing with his three-year-old son on his shoulders, they both fell. While his son was fine, Adam fractured a vertebra and lost the use of his left arm. On August 1, 2009, Adam had surgery to replace several discs with donor bone allograft. As a result, he now enjoys full function in his arm and is able to continue to work.  |
| **LINDA M. WEAVER** | Kidney Recipient | 57 | El Paso, AR | Chief Financial Officer  | Webco Mining, Inc. |
| ***Her story:*** | In 1974, at age 17, Linda Weaver was diagnosed with Bartter syndrome, a rare kidney disease. In her early 50s, her creatinine levels started to rise. Linda needed a kidney transplant and was put on the transplant waiting list. In the meantime, she was told to prepare for dialysis, which she did not want to accept. Instead, she emailed her friends stating that if anyone had a kidney to spare, she would gladly accept it. Her good friend, Frances Griffith, was a perfect match. On August 9, 2014, Linda and Frances celebrated the third anniversary of their kidney donation and transplant. Last year, they helped to decorate the 2014 Donate Life Rose Parade float. This year they will be honored on the 2015 Donate Life float as a rider and a walker.  |