

Rose Parade Float Inspires Worldwide Audience to “Donate Life”

By Sophia Mininni

“A Symphony of Life” indeed.

On New Year’s Day, the Coalition on Donation Rose Parade float and its rider contingent of donor family members, living donors and transplant recipients made its debut before hundreds of thousands of parade spectators and tens of millions of television viewers worldwide. And with it, the hopes and dreams of 56 official partners, hundreds of volunteers and untold millions touched by donation and transplantation saw a dream realized—and a new annual tradition inaugurated.

The project was originally proposed by lung recipient and TRIO member Gary Foxen of Orange, Calif., who felt a Rose Parade float would be a special way to honor donors, celebrate the gift of life and put a human face on the subject of donation and transplantation.

“I hope that our combined efforts will save the lives of many others by inspiring people to become donors,” said Foxen.

Certainly the sheer beauty of the float will inspire many. Carrying the theme *A Symphony of Life*, the float featured two gardens connected by a dramatic 50-foot bridge, symbolizing the living bridge between organ and tissue donors and recipients. The float and its riders attracted extraordinary media coverage, with more than 50 stories in national, regional and local news outlets.

Also inspiring is the dedication of the more than 700 volunteers—many of them transplant recipients and donor family members—who participated in float decorating.

“Our volunteers put their hearts into placing every seed and flower, and it showed,” said Bryan Stewart, communications director for OneLegacy and chairman of the float organizing committee. “Our float builder, Phoenix Decorating, who has built hundreds and hundreds of Rose Parade floats over the years, commented on the extraordinary craftsmanship accomplished by our volunteers, and for their commitment we are truly thankful.”