



Media Contacts:

Sandra Sanchez, Texas Organ Sharing Alliance
M) 956/605-0470 | ssanchez@tosa1.org

Kim Charles, Donate Life Texas
W) 214-443-4253 | kcharles@donatelifetexas.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Texas Liver Recipient Jeff Walburn to Ride on Donate Life Rose Parade Float® *Seen by millions on New Year's Day it will highlight the power of organ, eye and tissue donation*

AUSTIN, Texas (Dec. 27, 2018) – Liver transplant recipient Jeff Walburn, of Justin, Texas, who recently competed in Waco's Half Ironman triathlon and is an active volunteer in the North Texas donor community for LifeGift, will be seen by millions of people worldwide as he rides on the Donate Life float in the Rose Parade on New Year's Day in Pasadena, California.

Walburn, 53, was selected to ride in the "Rhythm of the Heart" float, which will help share the importance of organ, eye and tissue donation. The float features a tropical theme with giant drums and instruments, and vivid floral images that pay tribute to the selfless donors who have passed on organs to others, and to their families whose loved ones have made such sacrifices. The float also will feature living donors, and recipients, like Walburn who are walking examples of how organ donation gave them a second chance at life.

The Rose Parade will be broadcast beginning at 10 a.m. CST on Jan. 1, on ABC, NBC, Univision and the Hallmark Channel.

Walburn was among 3,000 athletes from 45 states on Oct. 28 to compete in Ironman 70.3 Waco, the first half-ironman race ever held in Waco. He finished the race in 6 hours and 15 minutes and did so wearing a jersey that bore the words "Second Chance Johnny" to thank his donor, who he has affectionately nicknamed "Johnny."

In 2007, Walburn received a liver from a 15-year-old boy in Indiana, after doctors noticed his liver was failing when he underwent a gallbladder surgery. Since then, he says he strives to daily honor his donor and to live life to the fullest.

"I started working out and eating healthier as a way to give my donor some honor," Walburn said. "There are so many in need of organ transplants. I've learned to appreciate every moment of life."

Each and every race, Walburn says, is a reminder at the second chance at life that he was given. It also reminds him of the 114,000 people nationwide who each day are waiting for organ transplants.

In Texas, there are 10,200 people in need of organ transplants, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. A person is added to the waiting list every 10 minutes.

As the world's most visible campaign to inspire organ, eye and tissue donation, The Donate Life Rose Parade® float has become an annual tradition that inspires viewers to help the over one million people in need of organ, eye or tissue transplants each year. This is the 16th year that the Donate Life Rose Parade float has participated in the parade to celebrate donation and its unique power to save, heal and transform lives.

The theme for the 130th Rose Parade® is The Melody of Life, which celebrates music, the universal language. The 2019 Donate Life “Rhythm of the Heart” float highlights the musical diversity and rhythms of Africa. Djembe drums from Senegal, along with a Kuba drum from the Congo will carefully integrate 44 floral portraits in their beautiful design, honoring the brave lives of deceased donors. Overlooking the floragraphs is a dramatic double Senufo mask from the Ivory Coast that gives thanks to ancestors and remembers those who have gone before. Twenty-six living donors or transplant recipients will ride or walk beside the float, gathering around the drums, a giant marimba from Ghana, and an exotic kora from Burkina Faso. The kora and marimba play important parts in the passing down of stories of previous generations in song. Rising over the rear of the float are spectacular chiwara headdresses from Mali; these stylized antelope headdresses are featured in dances that teach youth the value of community, in the same way the donation and transplantation community come together to share the importance of donation.

“Organ recipients, living donors, donor families, and the public in general, will find this theme very close to their hearts, as the restorative power of music can bring healing to donors and recipients alike,” said Tom Mone, chairman of the Donate Life Rose Parade® float committee and CEO of OneLegacy, the nonprofit organ, eye and tissue recovery organization serving the greater Los Angeles area. “We are deeply grateful to all of our Donate Life Rose Parade® float sponsors, who are helping us share the importance of donation on one of the biggest stages in the world, the Tournament of Roses® Parade. Our sponsors’ continuous and unconditional work within their communities empowers organ, eye and tissue recipients, as well as donor families to share their stories and inspire others to register.”

For additional information about the Tournament of Roses, please visit the official website at www.tournamentofroses.com. To view the Donate Life float, go to <http://fiestaparadefloats.com/>

About Donate Life Texas

The Donate Life Texas organ, eye and tissue donor registry started in 2006 and now has nearly 11 million registrants, making it the country’s second largest donor registry and among the fastest growing. The registry is supported by all three Texas organ procurement organizations, LifeGift, Southwest Transplant Alliance and Texas Organ Sharing Alliance as well as the 13 eye and tissue banks serving the state.

Signing up is fast and easy at DonateLifeTexas.org and provides a way for individuals to make their decision to be an organ, eye and tissue donor known.

Donate Life Texas is part of the Donate Life America not-for-profit alliance of national organizations and local partners across the United States, serving as a national voice and inspiring all people to save and enhance lives through organ, eye and tissue donation.

About the Pasadena Tournament of Roses®

The Tournament of Roses is a volunteer organization that hosts America’s New Year Celebration® with the Rose Parade® presented by Honda, the Rose Bowl Game® presented by Northwestern Mutual and a variety of accompanying events. 935 volunteer members of the association will drive the success of 130th Rose Parade themed “The Melody of Life,” on Tuesday, January 1, 2019, followed by the 105th Rose Bowl Game. For more information, visit www.tournamentofroses.com. Like us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/tournamentofroses) and follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/tournamentofroses), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/tournamentofroses) and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/tournamentofroses).

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(Editor’s Note: The float rendering is below.)

Rhythm of the Heart

