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Donate Life Northwest

www.donatelifenw.org

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WAVES AND THE DYNAMICS OF DONATION

Ashland Couple Reflect as Son Is Honored on New Year's Day Rose Parade Float;

***21-Year Old Evan Burke Gave the Gift of Life, Became Organ Donor
After Dying in Skateboard Accident***

Ashland, OR December 26, 2008---Jim Burke calls it the "Wave Theory of Organ Dynamics". The metaphor came to him the morning after he and his wife Lucille connected with the person who received a cornea from their son Evan when he died in 2005.

Evan was just two months past his 21st birthday when he was struck by a car while skateboarding in his hometown of Ashland. He was airlifted to OHSU in Portland for advanced trauma treatment but was pronounced brain dead soon after. At the time, Lucille recalled having had a conversation with Evan about organ donation and approached hospital staff with the possibility. Arrangements were made, the process initiated, and Evan became a donor.

Evan's heart, liver, kidney, corneas, bone and tissue were all transplanted. The Burke family has since become acquainted with the recipients of Evan's heart and liver, and is awaiting the opportunity to meet his kidney recipient.

When it was announced in November that Evan will be honored on the 2009 Donate Life Rose Parade Float on New Year's Day (in Pasadena) for giving the gift of life, Evan's cornea recipient saw the resulting media coverage and completed a thank you letter, begun shortly after his transplant, to Jim and Lucille. Jim's resulting theory presented itself.

According to Jim it's still in its early stages of formulation. But his "Wave Theory" definitely illustrates the power of the donation process. "A person's death can generate huge waves of sorrow and grief throughout his or her world," Jim explained. "But the act of donating an organ can also have a similar forceful yet positive effect. A person who receives an organ also radiates waves. These can be waves of joy, waves of positive energy, waves of love, waves of inspiration, waves of dedication, waves of new-found purpose, waves of peace." He added, "Hopefully this energy is absorbed and then amplified out again by the group of people who inhabit the recipient's world, always increasing the range of the original energy."

His wave theory also demonstrates the importance of increasing the size of the donor pool. There are now more than 2,500 men, women and children waiting for lifesaving organ transplants throughout the Pacific Northwest. There are over 100,000 on the national waiting list.

“Increasing the donor pool is vital to saving more lives,” said Mary Jane Hunt, executive director of Donate Life Northwest, the nonprofit organization that works to educate the public about the need for organ, tissue and eye donation and to increase donor registration. “There are three easy ways to indicate first person consent to become a donor in Oregon,” she explained. “Place a “D” on your driver’s license at any Oregon DMV office; register online at www.donatelifenw.org; or request a paper registration form (503-494-7888 or 1-800-452-1369).”

The waves and their outgoing influence became evident early on for the Burkes. “With our experience (and Evan’s gift) came the realization that the donation of a single organ not only saves one life, but it profoundly influences the lives of a huge circle of humanity---including spouses, partners, parents, children, siblings and their families, close friends, co-workers, schoolmates, neighbors,” Jim said. “Imagine how many people are affected when you donate all 8 organs, eyes, bone and tissue that just one person can give.”

When the Rose Parade airs on TV New Year’s Day, there will be more than just Evan Burke’s family and friends watching, waiting to see the float honoring Evan. Due to the waves created by Evan’s gift of life, the circle of interested viewers will probably be immeasurable. But no doubt one viewer will be watching with new meaningful interest---an act in itself made completely possible because of Evan’s gift.

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Photo Availability---Lucille Burke, herself an artist, flew to Pasadena last week to create Evan’s florigraph (an artistic portrait crafted with floral and other natural materials) which will adorn the float. Evan’s florigraph will join 37 other honored donors from around the country. The float is coordinated by OneLegacy, the Donate Life America member who has organized the Donate Life Rose Parade Float since its inception six years ago.

Digital photos of the florigraph creation will be available from Donate Life Northwest. Contact Janet Gonrowski, 503-234-0250, jgono@easystreet.net.

Video Availability---B-roll video of float construction is available at www.donatelifefloat.org. Note that this video was posted before Lucille Burke flew to Pasadena to create Evan’s florigraph.

About Donate Life Northwest

By providing current information on organ, eye and tissue donation, Donate Life Northwest, a nonprofit organization, has been successfully advocating for improved donation laws, educating the public, and raising the region’s donation rate since 1975. For more information visit www.donatelifenw.org or call 800.452.1369