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Illinoisan joins Olympic bronze medalist on Rose Parade float

ELMHURST, ILL. (SEPT. 2, 2003) - Olympic bronze medalist snowboarder Chris Klug will headline a group of 20 organ and tissue donor family members and transplant recipients - including a family from Illinois - selected to ride the 2004 Coalition on Donation Rose Parade® Float.

Klug, a two-time Olympian in snowboarding's giant slalom, won a bronze medal in the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic Games 18 months after receiving a lifesaving liver transplant. "Riding in the Rose Parade is one of the most wonderful ways I can think of to honor my donor and his family," said Klug. "I can't think of a more special way to celebrate the new year than to stand before millions of viewers and show how much they can make a difference to others such as myself."

Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network is among the float's 46 sponsors. The organization is also working with an Illinois family of an organ and tissue donor to represent the northern three-fourths of Illinois and northwest Indiana on the float during the parade. Seventeen additional donor family members and transplant recipients from across the United States will join Klug and the Illinois family, including Deputy Surgeon General of the United States, RADM Kenneth P. Moritsugu, MD, MPH.

Dr. Moritsugu is a donor husband and father, having twice given the gift of life on behalf of his loved ones. "I am honored to represent donor families as part of 'America's New Years Tradition'" said Moritsugu. "Participating in the Rose Parade is a wonderful way to celebrate the power each of us has to save lives through organ and tissue donation and transplantation."

The Coalition on Donation, a not-for-profit alliance of local affiliates and national organizations dedicated to inspiring all people to donate life through organ and tissue donation, is a first-time float participant. Carrying the theme A Symphony of Life, the float features a beautiful garden bridge as its centerpiece, with a long trellis intertwined with florals.

"It has been wonderful to see how our Rose Parade float has energized our community," said Bryan Stewart, chairman of the Coalition on Donation Rose Parade Float Committee. "As we head into the fall, we look forward to showing the world that organ and tissue donation and transplantation is something to be embraced, not feared. It's about special people with inspiring stories of courage, hope and grace."

Spearheaded by Coalition on Donation member OneLegacy, the not-for-profit, federally designated transplant donor network serving Southern California, the Coalition on Donation Rose Parade Float is supported by 46 partners from across the nation, including 25 organ and/or tissue recovery organizations, 15 industry partners, four transplant centers and two transplant recipient organizations.

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The 115th Rose Parade, themed Music Music Music, will take place on Thursday, January 1, 2004 at 8 am PST featuring spirited marching bands from throughout the nation, majestic floral floats and high-stepping equestrian units.

Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network is the federally mandated not-for-profit organ procurement organization (OPO) working with hospitals and families in the northern three-fourths of Illinois and northwest Indiana. Established in 1986, Gift of Hope is among the largest of the nation's 59 OPOs. Its main office is located in Elmhurst, a west suburb of Chicago, with satellite offices in Springfield, Rockford, Peoria, Champaign and Bloomington-Normal. For more information, contact Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network at 888/307-DON8

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