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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Berwyn Woman, Daughter to Ride 2005 Donate Life Rose Parade® Float 23 riding for organ/tissue donation include Nicholas Green family, Columbine survivor

ELMHURST, Ill. (Sept. 21, 2004) – A once-in-a-lifetime experience awaits Nimfa Melesio on New Year's Day: The Berwyn woman and her daughter Susana have just been named two of the 23 people from across the nation who will ride down Pasadena's Colorado Boulevard to show how families benefit from organ and tissue donation.

Nominated by Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network and a transplant coordinator at Loyola University Medical Center, Nimfa, 41, and Susana, 18, will take part in the 2005 Donate Life Rose Parade® Float. The float is the second annual parade entry by a nationwide partnership of organizations including Gift of Hope that are united to inspire people to "Donate Life" through organ and tissue donation.

"After transplantation, I vowed to do everything I wish I had done in my life, including attending college," said Nimfa Melesio, who received her life-saving transplant after 15 years of illness. "Now, after graduating, I'm no longer stuck with my nose in a book. I am reuniting with my family."

Susana Melesio called the wait for her mother's transplant "horrendous," adding that she has since helped a classmate through his father's wait for a transplant. Mother and daughter have both become active advocates for donation education, particularly in Chicago's Hispanic community.

"When I was a sophomore taking driver's education, I made a presentation in class about the importance of organ donation," Susana said, adding that classmates responded by deciding to become donors. "Hopefully many more people will feel the same way when they see our Rose Parade float on New Year's Day."

Joining the Melesios on the Donate Life float will be the family of young Nicholas Green. Nicholas' murder in Italy 10 years ago this month and his subsequent organ donation spurred a global surge in donation called "The Nicholas Effect." Also riding the float will be two sisters traveling from Littleton, Colo. to celebrate the gift of donated bone tissue that enabled one sister to keep and use her arm and hand following shotgun blasts in the library at Columbine High School.

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“The Rose Parade gives us a unique way to inspire more than 40 million viewers to make the commitment to donate life and discuss organ and tissue donation with their families,” said David Bosch, Gift of Hope Communications Director and a board director for the national Coalition on Donation.

“The Melesios truly represent the gifts of life and family made possible through donation,” he said. “They represent the tens of thousands of families here in Illinois with loved ones who have received the gift of life, who donated, or who continue waiting for a stranger’s selfless decision to donate life.”

The 116th Rose Parade, themed *Celebrate Family*, will begin at 10 a.m. CST on Saturday, Jan. 1. Featuring marching bands from throughout the nation, majestic floral floats and high-stepping equestrian units, the parade is annually seen by more than 800,000 spectators and more than 30 million U.S. TV viewers.

More than 86,000 Americans, including more than 4,700 in Illinois, currently await organ transplants. Every year hundreds of thousands of people need donated tissue to prevent or cure blindness, heal burns or save limbs. In 2004, America celebrates the 50th anniversary of the first successful organ transplant—a miracle of modern medicine that for two generations has paved the way for hundreds of thousands of individuals and their families to enjoy longer, fuller lives together.

Gift of Hope is the federally designated not-for-profit organ procurement organization (OPO) responsible for coordinating organ and tissue donation in the northern three-quarters of Illinois and northwest Indiana. Since its inception in 1986, Gift of Hope has coordinated donations that have saved the lives of more than 10,000 organ transplant recipients, and improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of tissue transplant recipients.

For more information, about organ and tissue donation, call the Gift of Hope Education Hotline at 888/307-3668 or visit www.giftofhope.org.

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