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Lifeline of Ohio Honors Pediatric Donor Families

Lifeline of Ohio honored 44 pediatric organ and tissue donors, along with their families, who gave the gift of life in 2007, at the annual Rose Dedication Ceremony at the Longaberger Alumni House.

Each of the families who attended the ceremony was presented with a replica of a dedicated rose that will ride on the Donate Life Rose Parade Float during the Tournament of Roses Parade on New Year's Day 2008. The roses are tagged with the name of the child it honors and will be placed in the "Family Circle Garden". Lifeline of Ohio was able to honor its pediatric donors because of an anonymous donation from a transplant recipient.

"Seeing the rose on the float gives families a tie to other donor families, and represents the life of their loved ones taking flight in helping someone else to live," said Jenny Hoover, Lifeline of Ohio donor family support coordinator.

The 2008 Donate Life float, themed Life Takes Flight, symbolizes the lives that are saved by organ, eye, tissue and blood donations as the recipients of the gift of life are lifted to new heights by the generosity of donors.

The Family Circle rose dedication program, which started in 2006, gives families an individual and emotional connection to the parade and the float.

"The Family Circle Program is a way for donor families to honor and commemorate their loved one's life and look beyond their loss," said Kent Holloway, Lifeline of Ohio CEO.

In addition to the sharing their personal stories tonight, heart recipient Rachel Ball and donor parents Mark and Marsha Burleson also spoke about their involvement in the 2008 Tournament of Roses Parade.

Rachel Ball thought meeting the family of her donor during ABC's 'Extreme Makeover: Home Edition' was her emotional pinnacle. However, when she travels to Pasadena on January 1, 2008 to walk with her donor's sister, Missy Tipton, in the five-mile Rose Parade her emotions may go one step further. Rachel and Missy will walk with seven other donor families holding a floral tether line connecting them to a floragraph, an artistic portrait painted with organic materials, of Ransom Tipton, Missy's brother and Rachel's donor. While Rachel is the only recipient walking in the parade, Bryan Stewart, chairman of the float organizing committee and vice president of communications for OneLegacy, thought it was appropriate to provide her the chance to participate and show the celebration that is possible between donor families and recipients.

Donor parents Mark and Marsha Burleson, whose daughter Kasey was an organ donor in November 2005, traveled to Pasadena on December 8th to decorate Kasey's floragraph as one of 40 floragraphs of organ and tissue donors on the Donate Life float.

Lifeline of Ohio is a participating sponsor of the Donate Life Float.

Nearly 100,000 Americans currently await life-saving organ transplants, with 18 people dying each day due to the shortage of donated organs. Every year hundreds of thousands of people need donated tissue to prevent or cure blindness, heal burns or save limbs.

Lifeline of Ohio is an independent, non-profit organ procurement organization whose purpose is to promote and coordinate the donation of human organs and tissues for transplantation in 39 counties throughout Central and Southeastern Ohio, as well as Hancock County and Wood County, West Virginia. Lifeline of Ohio provides services to 64 hospitals through its clinical staff that are on call 24 hours a day to coordinate the recovery and transport of the tissue and organs for transplant. Answers to questions about organ and tissue donation, the donation process and signing up in the Ohio Donor Registry, can be found at www.lifelineofohio.org.