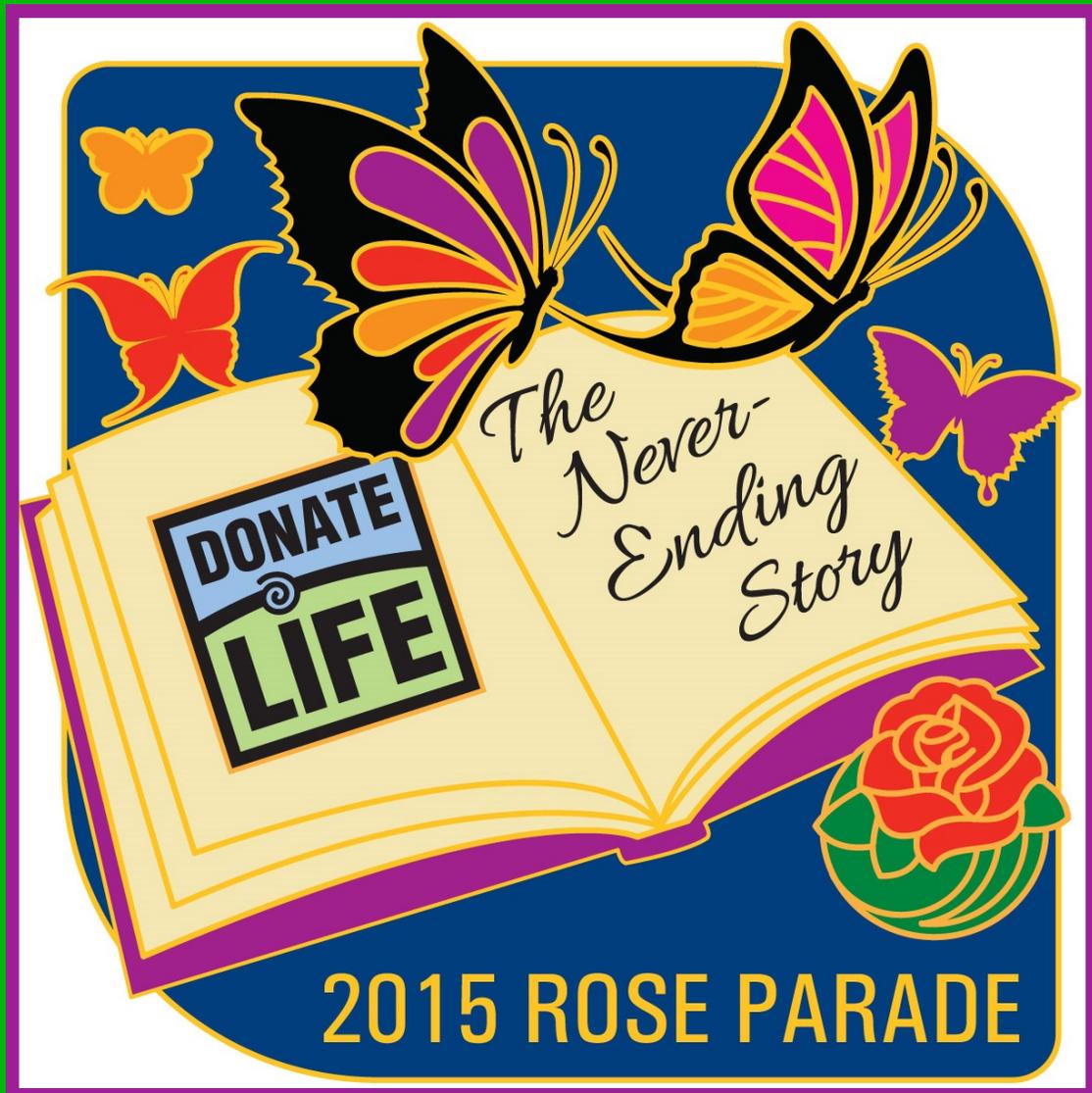


# Donate Life Rose Parade Float January 1, 2015



2015 ROSE PARADE

## My Wonderful Experience

By Frances Griffith

What an experience to be able walk with the Donate Life Rose Parade float representing Arkansas and living donors. I thank Webco Mining and the Arkansas Donor Family council for enabling me to participate. My recipient, Linda Weaver was riding the float, which made this trip even more special.

It is so wonderful to see how this float is both a healing experience for donor families and a joyful experience for organ recipients and living donors. Walking the parade route and seeing all of the support from the crowd was a very moving experience. I tell everyone I could have walked 20 miles that day instead of the 5, but my feet were certainly happy that it was only 5.

Each person that walked with the float was a living donor. For me, getting a chance to meet others that had the same experience with me in the donor process was wonderful. It was a blessing to connect with this group of new special friends.

As we rounded the corner to head down Pasadena Boulevard, I could see Linda Weadock, whose husband Mike was a floragraph. I practically ran down the parade route to get to her and give her a hug. There is nothing like the love and support that we got from Team Arkansas!

My favorite photo from the parade is of my daughter giving me some love along the parade route. The support of my family was instrumental in my decision to be a donor!

I will never regret the decision I made to help my friend in her time of need. She helps me in ways that she just doesn't realize. The entire experience has changed my life in every way and made me a better person.



## Forever Grateful

By Linda Weadock



My name is Linda Weadock and I had the privilege of attending the 2015 Tournament of Roses Parade. My husband, Mike, was one of 72 Floragraph Honorees on The Never Ending Story, the Donate Life Float.

A Floragraph is a photograph of someone covered in organic material. When I arrived in Pasadena on December 28<sup>th</sup>, I went straight to the barn where the float was housed. I worked with a wonderful lady, an artist named Lynne, to make the finishing touches and to add some of his personality to it. We worked for hours until finally I said, “that’s it, that’s him.” I saw firsthand the love and compassion put into the making of each and every one of them. It’s incredible the number of hours spent to get them just right. The volunteers are so talented and truly dedicated.



The following day my son, daughter-in-law, grandson and granddaughter arrived. I took them to the barn where the volunteers were working on the float. Almost immediately one of the crew chief’s grabbed my son, Chris and said, “I need you”. Chris is 6’ 3” and they needed someone to work on the butterfly up on the top and no one else could reach it.



Later we were all taken to a tent where we put water in the vials for the white dedication roses. Once we filled all they had given us they told us we weren’t done yet. They brought us dozens and dozens of beautiful



white roses to cut and place in the vials.

At 4:00 that afternoon we had a reserved time to place Mike’s dedicated roses on the float. Reading Mike’s dedications and placing his roses was very emotional for us all but very special.

On December 30<sup>th</sup>, they had a Floragraph Brunch for all the families of the honorees. The CEO, Tomas Mone of Once Legacy, spoke to us and made a statement that I can’t quote exactly but it was something like, “you are all part of a community that no one wants to be a part of, but once you are, you never want to leave it.”

We are part of such a great community of people who share a special bond made by the tragic loss of someone they will forever hold dear or by their gift of a life saving organ to one who so desperately needs it. This community understands our tears, our grief and our joy in knowing that a part of our loved one lives on in someone who needed help.



This trip was very special because I got to share my tears and joy not only with my family but with my special friends, Linda Weaver and Frances Griffith and the family of Matthew Morvin, a young 19 year donor whose family donated his lungs to Courtney Nichols, a float rider from Tennessee.

That evening they had a GALA for us all. It was a very beautiful event. In the hallway where they served drinks and hors d'oeuvres they had an ice sculpture in the shape of a butterfly with lights that kept changing the color. It was absolutely amazing to watch.



Below is my family from left to right at the Gala, Chris, Mason, Kenzie, Ronya and me





Inside the ballroom, the decorations were outstanding. The projections on the wall and the table centerpieces were just gorgeous. It was almost magical.

The program was very nice highlighting a choral group from one of the surrounding schools.

This was the centerpiece. Butterflies appeared to be flying from the vase along with

very tiny little blue lights. I just loved all the butterflies, especially the blue ones. Before Mike passed away he gave me a big blue butterfly encased in glass that I treasure.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> we got to see the float out of the barn for the first time in the sunlight in its splendor. It was absolutely breathtaking. The butterflies were unbelievable. Here's one of them in all its glory. The flower petals were glued to the butterfly one by one, making layers.

Shortly after our arrival we took our seats for the judging. It was so quiet you could hear a pin drop until they were finished and then the cheer was overwhelming



The next day was the big day, January 1, 2015. We left the hotel around 6:45 and walked to our grandstand seats along Colorado Blvd. I couldn't believe it, my family and I were on the very first row. We could almost touch the floats, bands and horses as they came by us. It was very cold but as the parade started and sun came up we forgot all about the cold. What an amazing experience it was. Finally we saw our float coming and I was breathless. Just as it was near us, Frances raised her yellow pullover and showed us her Razorback shirt. Without even thinking and I ran out and gave her the biggest hug I could. I ran over to where Linda Weaver was seated and blew her a big kiss. Then, through teary eyes, blew a kiss to

Mike's floragraph. There are no words that can even begin to describe the emotional high I was feeling and the honor being given to man I loved so very much.

My family and I got to share a once in a life time experience to honor a man that meant so much to all of us. My son and his family got to experience what this community is all about and to be a part of it. I am forever grateful.

## My Trip of a Lifetime

By: Linda Weaver

Our trip to Pasadena, CA was a trip of a Lifetime. We enjoyed meeting all of the Walkers, Riders and Floragraph families. It was so awesome to hear everyone's stories.



We had a Walker/Rider dinner for all of us to meet each other before New Year's Day. Our families joined us for the dinner. The Floragraph families had a brunch. Then we had our big Gala Dinner for everyone which was a wonderful event.

Some of us got to go to the barn and help decorate the float. They had so many on a waiting list this year that wanted to decorate for the first time. Some of us gave up our time slots to decorate so that others could have that experience. Frances and I did our "Rose Dedication" together. We had both dedicated a rose to each other and we placed them on the float ourselves. There were over 7000 dedicated white roses on the float from all over the US. There were 60 butterflies on the float and 72 Floragraphs on the spines of the books. Among the butterflies and floragraphs we had 30 riders that were all recipients

and we had 12 Living Donor that walked beside the float.

New Year's Day was finally here.....we were up at 3:00 am to get ready for the parade. We had to catch the shuttle at 5 am to head to breakfast at the famous "Vons" grocery store. They had a breakfast feast set for us which we truly enjoyed. Egg & sausage wraps, donuts, fresh fruit, orange juice, coffee.

Then we headed for the float area to get ready for the parade. Which we had to wait quite a while because our float was #25 in the parade and there were High School bands in between the floats. Finally.....it was our turn and we loaded up and we were ready. We turned the corner onto Colorado Avenue and there were so many people lined up to watch us it was just breathtaking. It is really hard to describe my feelings. I was grinning from ear to ear and crying at the same time. It was just so awesome. I will never forget it. It was my trip of a lifetime.



## Rose Ceremony

*Each rose dedicated in the rose ceremony carries a personal message of love & remembrance from a loved one or organ recipient. Thousands of roses are dedicated each year. If you are able to attend the rose parade, you get the pleasure of placing the roses that you dedicate on the float.*



Linda Weadock (seated on the right) & family. Linda's husband Michael suffered a stroke in 2008. His organs were donated saving 2 lives. His floragraph was on this year's float. Thank you Michael!

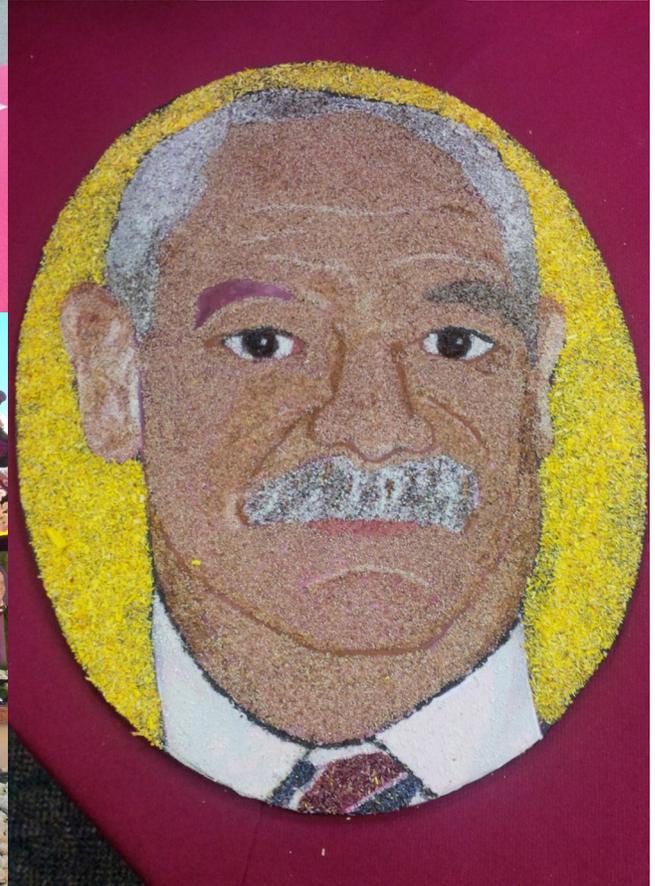
Frances Griffith (left) & Linda Weaver (right). In August 2011 Frances donated a kidney to her friend Linda. Linda had the honor of riding on this year's float while Frances walked beside her.

















# Join Us Next Year!

