



**2025 OneLegacy Donate Life Rose Parade® Float Honoree:  
*Joe Hecht, Donor Hero, Midwest Transplant Network***

Joe Hecht lived a life of adventures! As a kid, he visited Loch Ness in Scotland and had Christmas dinner on the USS Simon Lake AS-33 in Holy Loch, Scotland.

His mom, Sheila Hecht, was in the Navy. Growing up in Florida, he swam at the beach and played on the naval base. He graduated from high school in Washington and attended the University of Phoenix. Baseball, working on cars and jammin' to "California Love" by Tupac were his vibe.

Joe met his wife, Melissa, while she was working at an internship. The attraction was instant. "He's my first love." Together, they had adventures in the Amazon rainforest and Machu Picchu in Peru.

He loved spending time outdoors with their daughters, Elena and Isabelle. Their small family lived in mid-Missouri. His career as a hotel general manager meant that he met people every day and ensured hospitality and good experiences for guests.

Joe's willingness to help others is demonstrated by a story his mom shared. A friend was sick and needed a liver, so Joe was tested to be a donor but wasn't a match.

Joe, 38, became a donor hero in July 2020. He was the victim of a senseless act of gun violence while leaving work. After learning that he wasn't going to survive, Melissa struggled. "Because he was so strong, I could never think about losing him." Being a donor hero gives their family comfort. He donated his kidneys at MU Health Care in Columbia, Mo., saving the lives of two people.

“We are proud of Joe’s legacy as an organ donor. We always talk about daddy. He’s a hero. We are thankful to be invited to represent Joe at the Rose Parade®. It’ll be a wonderful memory for our family,” said Melissa Hecht.

Joe has a proud family history of organ donation. His grandfather was a donor, and Joe often talked about the benefits of organ, eye and tissue donation. His wife and mother are registered donors. Melissa is a volunteer Ambassador for Midwest Transplant Network, the organ procurement organization serving Kansas and western Missouri.