



MEDIA RELEASE

Nov. 20, 2024

For Consideration of Coverage

Media Invited to Event Recognizing 2025 Rose Parade Honoree

Portrait on Rose Parade ®float will honor Joe Hecht of Sturgeon, Mo., organ donor, during nationally televised New Year's celebration

WESTWOOD, Kan. — Midwest Transplant Network will host a ceremony for a floragraph portrait that will be featured on a float in the 2025 Rose Parade®. The Floragraph Finishing event is Thursday, Nov. 21 at 6 p.m. at the Boone County History and Culture Center in Columbia, Missouri.

Midwest Transplant Network is a co-sponsor of the 2025 OneLegacy Donate Life Rose Parade® float. Annually, MTN selects a donor hero to honor on the float. This year, the honoree is Joe Hecht of Sturgeon, Mo.

Joe was 38, a son, husband and father. He died in July 2020. He donated his kidneys at MU Health Care in Columbia, Mo., saving the lives of two people. Growing up, his mother, Sheila Hecht, served in the Navy. They lived in Florida and Washington, experiencing the world along the way. Baseball, working on cars and “California Love” by Tupac were his vibe. He enjoyed a life of adventure with his wife, Melissa, taking trips to the Amazon rainforest and Machu Picchu in Peru. Joe loved being outside with their young daughters, Elena and Isabelle.

“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.

About the float

All Rose Parade floats must be covered with flowers or other natural materials, such as leaves, seeds or bark. The OneLegacy Donate Life Rose Parade® float each year features numerous floragraphs, which are portraits made entirely of organic materials, remembering donors from around the country.

Hecht’s family – wife, mother, daughters and friends - will attend the finishing event to complete Joe’s portrait. Representatives from MU Health Care, the hospital where Hecht received care and donated his organs, will also attend the event.

“MU Health Care is proud to honor Joe’s memory. His extraordinary act of generosity reminds us of the power of compassion and humanity,” said [Dr. Mark Wakefield](#), MU Health Care Renal Transplant Program

director. “The transplant team at MU Health Care is committed to carrying forward his legacy of life and healing.”

“Serving selfless families like Joe Hecht’s is an incredible honor, and we look forward to recognizing them through this event and the Rose Parade,” said Midwest Transplant Network Chief Stakeholder Engagement Officer Sarah Oland, LMSW. “Donor heroes like Joe save and enhance lives every day, and his story is a testament to the powerful impact of organ, eye and tissue donation.”

The Rose Parade will broadcast live in the U.S. on Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2025, on ABC, NBC and Univision. Please check local listings for details. For additional information and resources about Midwest Transplant Network’s support of the Rose Parade, [please review the online toolkit](#).

ABOUT MIDWEST TRANSPLANT NETWORK

Midwest Transplant Network has been connecting lives in Kansas and western Missouri for more than 50 years. More than 7,500 organ donors from Midwest Transplant Network’s donor service area have contributed to over 28,000 lifesaving transplants since Midwest Transplant Network’s inception in 1972. Additionally, more than 24,000 tissue donors have given gifts in this timeframe, enabling more than 2 million life-enhancing tissue transplants for burn victims, cancer survivors, individuals with sports-related injuries and more.

Organ donor heroes from Midwest Transplant Network’s service area saved the lives of 13 people with organ transplants in 1972. In 2023, that number was 988, illustrating the thoughtfulness of people in Kansas and western Missouri; the strong support from Midwest Transplant Network’s hospital and community partners; and Midwest Transplant Network’s commitment to continual improvement and saving more lives. For more information, visit mwtn.org.

ABOUT MU HEALTH CARE

University of Missouri Health Care is an academic health system with a mission to save and improve lives. Caring for patients from each of Missouri’s 114 counties, MU Health Care specialists treat the simplest and most complex medical conditions, conduct research that leads to breakthroughs and train the next generation of doctors to do the same. Committed to collaboration, research and innovation, MU Health Care has more than 8,000 physicians, nurses and health care professionals in over 80 specialties working together to give patients seamless care with the most advanced treatments and safest procedures. Serving more than 350,000 patients each year, MU Health Care facilities include Capital Region Medical Center, Children’s Hospital, Ellis Fischel Cancer Center, Keene Street Medical Center, the Missouri Orthopaedic Institute, Missouri Psychiatric Center and University Hospital, as well as more than 80 quick care, urgent care, primary care and specialty clinic locations. For more information, visit <http://muhealth.org>.

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