

Celebrating Legacy: The Gift of Life Honored at the 2025 Rose Parade



On a radiant New Year's Day, the streets of Pasadena, California, were alive with excitement as the 2025 Rose Parade® kicked off, drawing thousands of eager spectators and viewers from around the globe. The air was infused with the sweet aroma of fresh flowers as cheers erupted to signal the beginning of this beloved annual event.

Among the stunning floats was the OneLegacy Donate Life float, which dazzled onlookers and ultimately took home the prestigious Extraordinaire Award. This year's float, a vibrant tribute inspired by Japan's cherished Children's Day celebration, featured colorful Koinobori—traditional cloth koi fish streamers—adorning a scenic landscape. Nestled within their scales were florigraph portraits of donors who gave the gift of life, including the tribute to 10-year-old Hayden Ellias.

Hayden's parents, Mary and Greg Ellias watched proudly at the sidelines as the float paraded by, reflecting on their son's remarkable legacy.

“Attending the Rose Parade and seeing our son’s memory honored on the float was both emotional and uplifting. The float’s intricate design, filled with tributes to donors, served as a powerful reminder of his lasting legacy. It was a moment of immense pride and reflection, knowing that his generosity continues to touch so many lives,” Mary said.



Inspiring Organ, Eye, and Tissue Donation

This year marked LifeNet Health's ninth year sponsoring the OneLegacy Donate Life float. The float serves as a vehicle for raising awareness about the pressing need for organ, eye, and tissue donations, with over one million individuals requiring transplants each year. The overall theme of the parade, "Best Day Ever," aligned perfectly with OneLegacy's inspiring choice to name their float "Let Your Life Soar."

The float's design pays homage to Japan's Kodomo no hi (Children's Day), a celebration dedicated to honoring children and wishing them happiness. The national holiday is well known for its traditions and decorations, including Koinobori. The Koinobori are flown on poles outside of public buildings and houses to bring luck and good fortune to the children within.



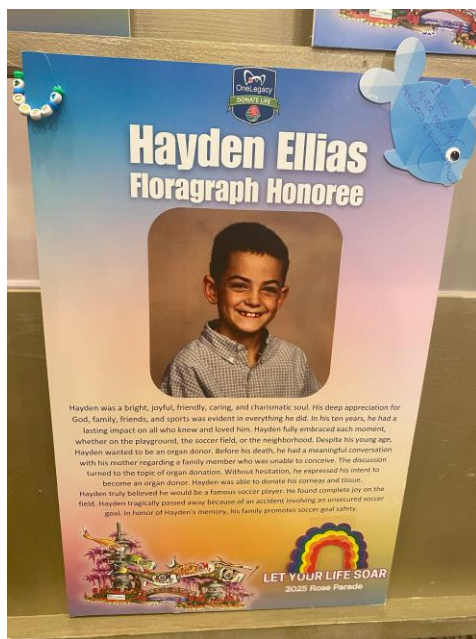
The float's Koinobori is in a sequence representing father, mother, and children following streamers depicting a family crest, yielding a visual narrative of familial love and connection. The striking visuals include a garden containing flowering trees, a stream, a Japanese-style garden bridge, and stone lanterns.

In addition to the breathtaking scene, the float included organ, eye, and tissue recipients who were filled with gratitude and living donors walking alongside, showcasing the transformative impact of living donations.

Remembering Hayden's Spirit

Hayden was known for his infectious energy, determination, and kindness. His passion for sports, especially soccer, revealed his fearless spirit; he embraced the game wholeheartedly despite initial reservations. However, tragedy struck when an unsecured soccer goal fell on him. Despite medical efforts, Hayden's life ended far too soon.

In a profound twist of fate, weeks before his passing, Hayden confided to his mother that he wanted to be a donor, illustrating an understanding of the importance of helping others from an early age. Thanks to his selfless decision, his tissue and cornea donations have given hope to families in need.



Mary Ellias turned her grief into action, founding "Hayden's Goal," a nonprofit organization aimed at promoting soccer goal safety. The initiative has sparked significant awareness regarding the dangers of unsecured goals through workshops, educational videos, and grants for secure soccer equipment. Their advocacy contributed to establishing safety standards, including the innovative "Push, Don't Pull" method for inspecting soccer goals.

In honoring Hayden at the Rose Parade, Mary and Greg have celebrated their son's legacy and amplified the critical message of organ and tissue donation. As the float glided through Pasadena, it became a symbol of

hope, resilience, and the enduring power of giving.

“This journey has filled our hearts with a new sense of purpose and gratitude, knowing that through donation, our son’s life continues to make a difference. We are forever inspired to advocate for this cause and honor the extraordinary gift of life,” Mary said.

This New Year's Day in Pasadena was not just a celebration of the parade but a powerful reminder of the lives changed through the gift of life, one legacy at a time.