

Donate Life Float....it's not just about the Rose Bowl Parade

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This past Sat, I had the privilege of decorating the Donate Life float in Pasadena that will be in the Rose Bowl parade. This was my second year, and Conna's (my kidney donor) third year. It's our new holiday tradition, and one I love to be a part of.

The theme for this years' float is "Seize the Day", and they wanted to express carefree nature with an intricate kite design. The entire float is organic and the level of detail is certainly not appreciated to those on the parade route or watching on television. There are rows of tables filled with volunteers picking flower petals to be glued, or ground into paint. Barrels of rice, beans, seeds either whole or being ground. Conna and I were assigned to glue 3 rows of split peas, 1 half at a time, on a kite tail. It took us 6 hours to complete a single 6-ft tail. We were chatting about the patience it required. I put it into perspective --- doing something like that is nothing compared to being on the wait-list for an organ.

Working beside us, we met two ultraistic donors who both donated their kidney in the beginning for Nov to complete strangers. They felt compelled to "share their spare". Whenever I meet those types of donors, I am in awe. It is a reminder the world is filled with good people willing to help their fellow mankind, expecting nothing in return except for someone to have better life, and better health.

The bigger purpose of the float is to honor deceased donors and their remaining loved ones. This year, 60 deceased donors are featured on the float. Their families create a portrait floragraph of their loved one. If the family cannot travel to California, volunteers complete the image except for the eyebrows. The portrait is sent to those families so they can fill in the final piece and be a part of the remembrance process. They work in the back of the pavilion, and it is understandably somber in that area. When a donor family member sees a recipient like me, who is healthy and able to work on the float, they often give me a nod or a small smile, because they know their loss has provided life to someone else like me.

The website describes the float, biographies of each deceased donor, and pictures & video of the decorating progress until parade day. The stories of those in the floragraphs is certainly worth a read, especially during this time of year when people get caught up in the materialistic chaos of the holidays. <http://www.donatelifefloat.org/prod/components/>