

Press Release
For Immediate Release
December 13, 2007

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Joplin Hospitals Honor Organ, Eye and Tissue Donors at Rose Bowl Parade

ST. LOUIS (December 13, 2007) -- Freeman Health Systems and St. John's Regional Medical Center, both located in Joplin, Mo., have seized upon an exciting opportunity to showcase the life-saving benefits of organ, eye and tissue donation - to more than 30 million people. In January Freeman and St. John's will be honoring all of their 2006 organ, eye and tissue donors in the Rose Bowl Parade as part of Donate Life's "Life Takes Flight" float.

To participate in the Donate Life float, hospitals, families and individuals are invited to purchase a rose through the Family Circle Rose Dedication Program. These roses are dedicated to an individual organ, eye or tissue donor, and make up the hundreds of roses adorning the 2008 float. Through this special program, Freeman Health Systems and St. John's Regional chose to honor the more than 100 donors from their hospitals whose selfless donation enriched and saved the lives of countless individuals.

Although the 2008 parade marks the first year Freeman and St. John's participated in Donate Life's float for the Rose Parade, both hospitals set an inspiring example by not only honoring their organ donors, but their eye and tissue donors as well. This all-encompassing view of donation has inspired other hospitals to honor all forms of donation in the Donate Life float as well.

The idea to participate in the 2008 Rose Parade and Donate Life float came from a Midwest Transplant Network (MTN) conference in July. Darian Weaver from Heartland Lions Eye Banks and Cathy Lucchi from MTN were intrigued, and pitched the idea to Freeman and St. John's. Gary Duncan, CEO of Freeman, and Debbie Linnes, CEO of St. John's, enthusiastically agreed to take part in Donate Life's float.

"There is a lot of excitement about the float," said Darian Weaver, branch manager of the Heartland Lions Eye Banks Joplin branch. "It shows the commitment everyone has to donation, and has really united and strengthened the partnerships between the hospitals, eye banks and Organ Procurement organizations."

Though the participation in the Rose Parade was an exemplary effort as it is, Freeman and St. John's wanted to take the spirit of the Donate Life float one step further. A local ceremony was held December 2 to present roses to all of the donor families from

Freeman and St. John's. The ceremony honored donors and their families while also bringing a small part of the "Life Takes Flight" spirit to Missouri.

The 2008 Rose Bowl Parade airs January 1, 2008 at 8 a.m. PST. The parade is attended each year by approximately 1 million spectators, and is also broadcast in more than 150 countries and territories worldwide. The Rose Parade will be broadcast live by the ABC and NBC television networks.

Heartland Lions Eye Banks is a division of the Missouri Lions Eye Research Foundation, a statewide 501(c)3 corporation based out of Columbia, Mo., with the mission to preserve and restore eyesight through the work of its community programs and eye bank operations. For more information on our programs, please visit www.mlerf.org or www.hleb.org.

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