

POINT PLEASANT REGISTER

Peace from letting go

Ceremony draws attention to organ donation

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[The family of the late Kevin Boyles put the finishing touches on a floragraph which will adorn a Donate Life float in the upcoming Rose Parade. The](#)



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[This finished floragraph will travel the Rose Parade route in honor of Kevin Boyles and other organ donors. Kevin's parents plan to travel to Pasadena...](#)

POINT PLEASANT — Sometimes true strength lies in letting go rather than hanging on.

Perhaps no one knows the unequivocal terms of this truth as those who loved and lost an organ donor.

When Annette Boyles of Point Pleasant arrived at the podium in the lobby of Pleasant Valley Hospital (PVH) on Thursday, she was there to speak on behalf of her family, including her late son, Kevin Boyles who was an organ donor. A floragraph of Kevin was ceremoniously decorated

during an event at PVH and will adorn the Donate Life's float in the 2014 Rose Parade. The floragraph, a portrait of Kevin created from flowers, is sponsored by the Center for Organ Recovery and Education (CORE) which also hosted Thursday's program at PVH.

Kevin died suddenly in 1997 when he was 22 from an undetected heart condition. When he died, he was a senior at West Virginia University pursuing a degree in forestry, loved sports (including the Mountaineers) and enjoyed spending time outdoors as well as with family and friends. Kevin renewed his drivers license six weeks before his death and because of this, he was a tissue as well as cornea donor. Because of his gifts, two people who were once blind can now see the world through Kevin's eyes and others received life-saving or life-enhancing issue transplants because of him.

Of course, Kevin, as all organ donors, are more than abstract statistics. He had a family who may've let him go physically but never let him go from their hearts and minds.

Annette, supported by her husband Kenny, two sons, mother, granddaughter and daughter-in-law, told those gathered she appreciated an opportunity for her to express "the never ending love we have for Kevin." She talked about the last time she saw Kevin and how he got out of his car to give her "one more hug."

When talking about the floragraph created in Kevin's likeness, Annette said seeing it allows his family to "hug him with our hearts."

Also speaking at the ceremony were Misty Enos from CORE, saying the floragraph of Kevin will be one of 81 on the Rose Parade float. She said right now, there are 800 people in West Virginia waiting to receive life saving organs.

Michelle Christenson, donor family coordinator for CORE, spoke about this year's parade float theme - "Light Up the World" which will appear as lanterns and contain the floragraphs. The parade float is part of a national media campaign to raise awareness of organ donation.

PVH Interim CEO Larry Unroe also spoke about the hospital getting an "extraordinary opportunity" to play a meaningful part in the "wonderful tradition of the Rose Parade." He also spoke about the late Mildred Irene Shields, recognizing the local woman who donated her kidney and liver to patients waiting on a second chance. Shields' organs were the first to be recovered at PVH for recipients waiting on a second chance at life at hospitals in Charleston and Pittsburgh, Pa.

In a statement, Susan Stuart, president and CEO of CORE said, "When an individual makes the pledge to become an organ, tissue and cornea donor, they make a Pledge for Life. At CORE, our work is inspired by individuals like Kevin who said 'yes' to donation. This selfless act has enabled his legacy to live on and for others to have a second chance at life. We are proud to honor Kevin and recognize his family for their son's life-saving gifts, and are pleased that West Virginia will be represented in this year's Rose Parade."

The ceremony closed with Kevin's family members adding the finishing touches to his floragraph. After the ceremony, Annette confirmed she and her husband, along with several other family members, will be traveling to Pasadena, Calif. to decorate the Donate Life float and meet with other donor families.

Annette said, as a nurse, she has seen both sides of the organ donor issue and added she personally knew Mildred Irene Shields whom Unroe recognized earlier for her selfless gift. During the ceremony Annette also recognized Jo Burka, a kidney donor in the audience - all of this underscoring the many stories and heroes of organ and tissue donation. As for the myths and misconceptions about organ donation, Annette said those can be negated by research and asking questions.

Of course, nothing negates that letting go process and during the ceremony Annette recited a poem reminding all: "Our letting go can only bring peace to those who wait."

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