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Barrington woman to honor husband's memory, organ donation in Pasadena Rose Parade

By: Blair Chavis/Triblocal.com staff reporter

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Barrington resident Anne Gulotta said she will never forget the day when she drove home from work to find her driveway blocked with emergency vehicles.

Gulotta's teenage children, Jay Jr. and Elizabeth, who were home at the time, discovered that their father, Jay, had shot himself in the upstairs attic.

On May 7, 2002, Jay Gulotta, 47, was rushed to Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital in Barrington and lived for 24 hours on a respirator, Anne Gulotta said.

On May 8, the hospital pronounced him brain-dead, she said. Soon after, the family was approached about organ donation.

"It's such a difficult time to make that decision," Gulotta said.

"But, we said, 'Yes.' We knew it was the right thing to do."

Since Jay's death, Gulotta has transformed her family tragedy into a personal cause and has become active in spreading the word about organ donation.

This New Year's Day, Anne Gulotta will be honored when she rides on the Donate Life float in the 2010 Rose Parade in Pasadena, Calif.

New Year's Day will not be the first time Gulotta has ridden in a parade promoting organ donation; she organized a float four years ago in Barrington's 4th of July parade.

A bond trader by day, Anne Gulotta manages to find time to talk to community groups, schools, forums, hospitals, and also sits on Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network's board of directors.

"Organ and tissue donation, it's not about death; it's about life," said David Bosch, director of communications for Gift of Hope, a federally designated non-profit agency that coordinates organ and tissue donation in the northern three-quarters of Illinois and northwest Indiana. "When someone dies, there's something good that [can] come from it."

Five million people have signed up for Illinois' donor registry, Bosch said. However, there are few people who can be donors. When the process works, that's unique, he added.

In order to be an organ donor, Bosch said, one has to die of brain death-and then the organs have to be kept viable through a ventilator pumping blood to them.

Illinois law changed in 2006 regarding donor registry: Prior to 2006, a registrant's decision was not legally binding and a family member or other legal authority had to still give consent for one to become a donor. After 2006, the intent registry changed into a first-person consent registry, no longer requiring familial consent.

One donor can save or enhance the lives of more than 25 people, according to Donate Life Illinois' Web site. More than 6,000 people died nationwide waiting for an organ transplant in 2008, the site stated, and more than 300 of them were from Illinois.

"We're creating a legacy in [Jay's] name," Anne Gulotta said.

Anne Gulotta will join 23 other float riders from 13 states, which will include transplant recipients, living donors and family members of deceased donors.

Donate Life is honoring the parade's theme, "A Cut Above The Rest," with the theme of "New Life Rises," which will be portrayed on the float with a mythical phoenix, a symbol for life emerging from the ashes of death.

Its tail feathers will be laid with 76 floragraphs, or portraits made from floral and natural materials, depicting donors, including Jay, as well as supporters of Donate Life.

Anne Gulotta's children will be joining her in Pasadena to watch the parade.

An aspiring musician, Jay Gulotta Jr., 23, said it's been difficult for him to open up about his loss, but this year he co-wrote a song in remembrance of his father, titled "Thank You."

"My father and I had a strong bond with music," Jay Gulotta Jr. said. "[It's] like having a connection with my father even though he's not here."

Jay Gulotta Jr. said he admires his mother's volunteer efforts.

"[Organ donation is] a way to continue life and create good out of unfortunate circumstances, and keep the memory of your loved ones going," he said.

Jay Gulotta's heart went to a 55-year-old man, his left kidney went to a 42-year-old woman and his right kidney went to a 16-year-old girl.

The 121st Rose Parade will take place at 8 a.m. pacific-standard-time, New Year's Day.

For more information about organ donation, go to www.giftofhope.org or www.donatelifellinois.org.

To listen to Jay Gulotta Jr.'s song, "Thank You," go to www.myspace.com/jaygulotta.

-By [Blair Chavis](#)|Triblocal.com reporter

Photo submitted by Gift of Hope

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