

Abby Cecena's Life Is A 'Never-Ending Story' - Her Organ Donation Gives New Life to Others

By Bethany Prange

THE INDEPENDENT

When Tammy Cecena lost her 16-year-old daughter Abby in a car accident in 2012, she knew nothing could erase the pain caused by such a tragic loss.

But through organ donation, Tammy Cecena, her eldest daughter, Madison, and Abby's twin sister Kady, have been able to see Abby's legacy live on.

Abby had always aspired to become an organ donor, but could not officially register because she was only 16, Cecena said. So when the time came, Abby's family did not hesitate to honor her wishes.

"Abby was able to bring the gift of 'new' life to many," Cecena said. "Over the last two years my girls and I have had the honor of meeting her

right kidney recipient, Monica, and her heart recipient, Brenda."

Until now, only the Cecenas and the recipient families have been able to witness the impact Abby had on others.

Then the Mid-America Transplant Services chose Abby to be one of the 72 donor legacies to be honored on the 2015 Donate Life Rose Parade float, themed "The Never-Ending Story."

The float will feature 60 butterflies emerging from an open book to symbolize the power of organ, eye and tissue donation, according to Donate Life America. The butterflies will ascend above 72 volumes adorned with floragraph portraits of deceased donors, including Abby Cecena.

An artist in California

created the floragraph of Abby's face that will be used on the float. Mid-America Transplant Services then shipped the piece to Waterloo so the Cecenas could help complete it.

The finished floragraph was unveiled on Nov. 23, 2014 at SS. Peter and Paul Grade School in Waterloo.

Tammy Cecena and her family will travel to Pasadena, Calif., to take part in the Donate Life events leading up to the 126th Rose Parade on Jan. 1, 2015.

"Over the last two years the experiences my girls and I have shared because of Abby's gift... words cannot explain," Cecena said. "I can say that I have truly learned to look at life more full circle. Even though I miss Abby every second of every minute of every day, I thank God for

giving her the gift of heaven and for choosing her as someone who could give 'new' life to others."

The Donate Life float and its honored participants are part of a national campaign that leads up to the 2015 Rose Parade, themed "Inspiring Stories."

Twelve living organ donors will walk alongside the float, and 30 transplant recipients will ride the float. Monica, the woman who received Abby's right kidney, will be riding the float holding a picture of Abby.

According to Donate Life America, one person can save up to eight lives through major organ donation and help 50 people or more who need corneas, bones, connective tissue or skin.

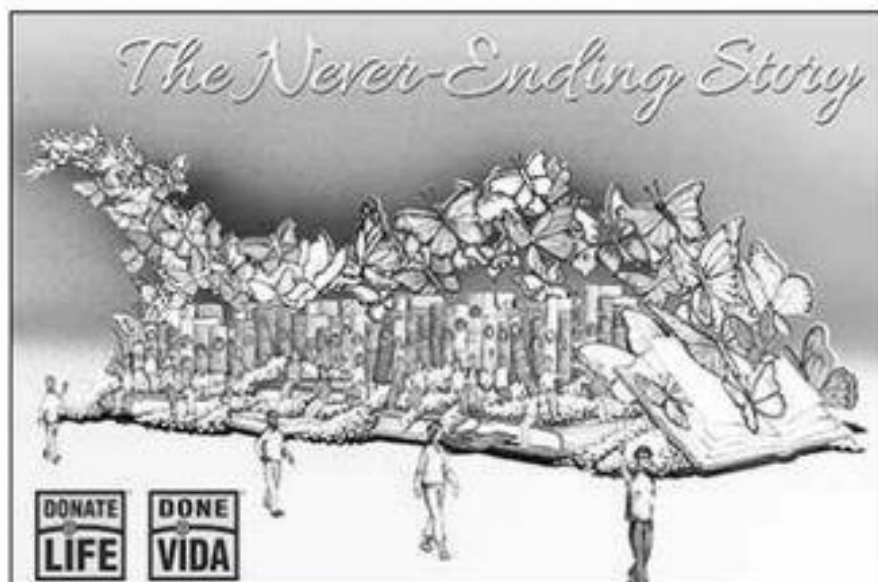
"We no longer view Abby's death as a tragedy but as a way to inspire others to become organ donors," Cecena wrote on Abby's



Abby Cecena

Donate Life page. "Abby's legacy and spirit will continue to thrive through those who received her organ donations as well as everyone who was inspired by her infectious passion for life itself."

Anyone can sign up to donate their organs when renewing a driver's license or state ID, or by visiting www.donatelifeamerica.org.



An artist's rendering of the Mid-America Transplant Services' float for the 2015 Donate Life Rose Parade in Pasadena, Calif. The float, themed "The Never-Ending Story" features 72 floral portraits of organ donors, including Abby Cecena.

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