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DECISION TO DONATE MARKS A MOVEMENT IN LOCAL COMMUNITY; HAVE YOU MADE YOUR DECISION TO DONATE?

On July 23, Local Filmmaker will debut award-winning film in Seattle along with another local family's video journey to donation

Local luminaries proclaim "I have made my decision to donate" in support of organ, eye, and tissue donation

SEATTLE, WA. – (July 1, 2009) – When John Backus of Seattle discovered his friend Larry Hietpas needed a kidney transplant, his response was “What does that mean?”. What that meant for John was that he had the ability to save Larry’s life. John’s son Massimo chronicles John’s journey to becoming a living organ donor – Larry’s kidney donor- in the remarkable film, “Decision to Donate”. Alongside this film is the story of Bothell’s Baldwin family who awoke one horrific day to find their 12-year-old son unresponsive on the couch. The film, recounting their own journey to donate Cole’s organs, will be shown beside the Backus’ story at a local screening presented by the Washington donation and transplant community on July 23 from 5:30-7:30 at the Nesholm Family Lecture Center at McCaw Hall.

The screenings will mark the launch of the “Decision to Donate Movement” asking each Washington resident to make their personal Decision to Donate and encouraging their family and friends to do the same.

In addition to the donation and transplant community-- which includes Donate Life Today, Northwest Kidney Centers, Seattle Children’s Hospital, Swedish Medical Center, University of Washington Medical Center, and Virginia Mason Medical Center —local luminaries have shown their support by declaring “I have made my decision to donate”. They include:

- Chris Ballew and Dave Dederer, The Presidents of the United States of America
- Richard Conlin, President, Seattle City Council
- Dow Constantine, Chair, King County Council
- Mike Gastineau, Talk Show Host, KJR Radio
- Geo and Saba, Blue Scholars
- Stone Gossard, Pearl Jam
- Devanni Partridge, Miss Seattle 2009

The film “Decision to Donate” received first place in the feature film category on June 13 at the first-ever Donate Life Hollywood Film Festival. “When we created this film, we hoped a few people would see it and have a conversation about donation,” said Massimo Backus. “We are astonished at the amount of people it has reached, and I’m so proud of my Dad for inspiring so many.”

The morning of March 13, 2007, 12-year-old Cole Baldwin was up early finishing his homework. Around 7am, his family found him seizing on the couch and unresponsive. Cole had suffered a brain aneurysm and never recovered. Deciding some good should come out of this tragedy, his family chose donation. In all, Cole donated his heart, liver, kidneys, lungs and corneas. He saved five lives. “It really has helped us feel like Cole’s life wasn’t wasted and that he now lives on in the lives of many people,” said his mom, Marta.

“These films capture the essence of donation, which is total selflessness,” says Megan Erwin, Executive Director of Donate Life Today. “In giving people an inside look at their journey to donation, they each give us all another priceless gift.”

To launch the Decision to Donate Movement on Thursday July 23, John, Marta, Massimo and others will come together with area hospitals, medical professionals, transplant teams, donor families, recipients and living donors to share their stories, screen these films, and offer a panel for discussion of organ, eye, and tissue donation. The event is free and open to the public.

“There are more than 100,000 patients waiting today for a life saving transplant,” adds Erwin. “This event will allow us to share stories and raise awareness of this healthcare problem that - by working together - we can solve.”

The Washington Donate Life Today Registry is a confidential database of donation wishes to be carried out at the time of death. By educating the community about the need and the importance for people to register their donation wishes, they hope to help the 1,600 people waiting for a transplant within their own community. As part of the Decision to Donate movement, Donate Life Today is encouraging the entire community to join the movement by helping them reach their goal of 100,000 clicks at www.DonateLifeToday.com.

EVENT RECAP:

Who:

The local community of living donors, transplant recipients, donor families, local luminaries, medical professionals and anyone who attends the event.

What:

A movement encouraging all of Washington to make their Decision to Donate, being kicked off with a screening of the award winning “Decision to Donate”. This documentary features Seattle’s John Backus, a living kidney donor, alongside another moving video about Cole Baldwin, the 12-year-old who saved the lives of 5 others in his unexpected passing-- and his parents’ “Decision to Donate” in the face of tragedy.

The evening will also include testimonies from a dozen others community members about their decision to donate, offer the community an opportunity to ask questions of a panel of experts, and encourage everyone to begin their own journey toward a decision to donate.

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

When:

Thursday, July 23rd, from 5:30-7:30pm

Where:

Nesholm Family Lecture Hall at McCaw Hall, Seattle, WA

Why:

Nationally, there are over 100,000 people waiting for organ transplants. We'll share stories to raise awareness of this healthcare problem that – working together- we can solve.

VIEW AND SHARE WITH YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- Decision to Donate www.DecisionToDonate.com <<http://www.decisiontodonate.com/>>
- The Story of Cole Baldwin <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rg-S9bHkzhw>