



Sheree and Mike Jones, with their daughter Jessica and son-in-law Jonathan honor the memory of their son Chad, whose organ donations helped save many lives

Celebrating Chad

Remembering the life he lived. Celebrating the lives he saved.

*By Wendy Clark and Katrina Katsarelis
Select Photography by Suzi Issa*

On June 6, 2009, Katyites Mike and Sheree Jones' lives were forever changed when their 21-year-old son was involved in a tragic accident. Charles "Chad" Jones was riding his motorcycle on the 610 loop when he was struck by road debris - a bedpost that had fallen off a vehicle. Chad was thrown off his bike and fell 50 feet onto the shoulder of Hwy 59 below. Though Chad wore a helmet and full protective gear, the 2006 Cinco Ranch High School grad sustained numerous injuries. In the final days of his life, Chad had hundreds of visitors file through his hospital room to say their final goodbyes. After being in a coma for nine days, Chad was declared brain dead on June 15, 2009.

Mike and Sheree and Chad's older sister Jessica were approached by members of Life Gift and were asked about donating Chad's organs. Just a week before the accident, Chad and Jessica had seen the movie *Seven Pounds*, a film about organ donation and how it impacts the lives of others. After the movie, Chad and Jessica had a brief discussion and agreed they would one day like to be organ

donors. In the wake of Chad's accident, the Jones family chose to honor Chad by donating his heart, kidneys, and liver, as well as some tissue and tendons. All of his organs went to Houston-area recipients. "Chad was a great young man, and liked by all," his mother Sheree says. "His nickname was 'Chadmod', because starting when he was 6 years old, he modified everything he could get his hands on. Chad's first skateboard had to have different wheels, so his would be unique," she fondly recalls.

Seize the Day

Sheree, a flight attendant for Continental Airlines, was on a layover in late 2010 when she was contacted by Laura Frnka, a LifeGift representative who offered the Jones family an opportunity to honor Chad yet again - this time with a national audience. Donate Life, a national organ donation advocacy group,



sponsors a float each year in the annual Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena, CA, and they were looking for honorees to be portrayed on florigraphs for the float. Frnka knew Chad Jones was a wonderful choice. "There was no formal process for Chad to be selected. The opportunity fell in our lap and the first organ donor I thought of was Chad," says Frnka. "Chad's story is special in many ways, but probably one of the reasons why we chose him is

because his parents have become advocates for organ and tissue donation as a result of their son's death." Mike and Sheree flew to Pasadena to attend the parade along with 59 other donor families. The Donate Life float won "Best Representative of the Theme," which was "Seize the Day."

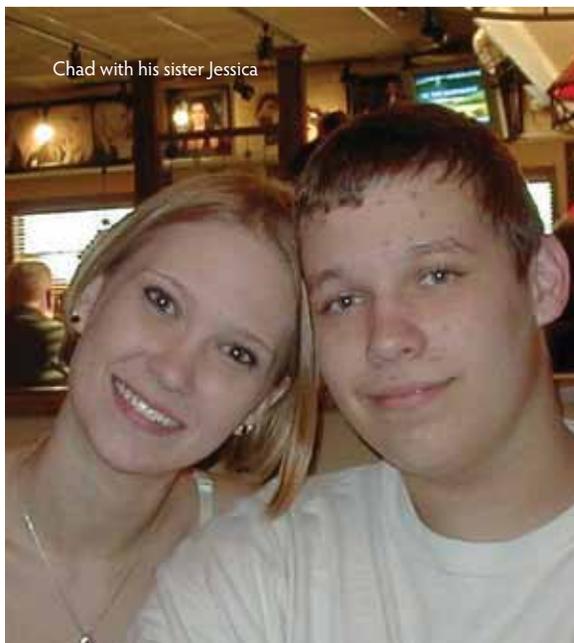
A Chad Moment

"I had been videotaping the float judging when all of a sudden, I had a 'Chad moment' and began crying uncontrollably," shares Mike, Chad's father. "I excused myself and just cried." Suddenly, Mike felt three sets of arms around him — other organ donor parents who understood his grief. "They knew just what to say to me," Mike says. "It was very moving. It was a powerful experience for a lot of people." The Jones family watched from the stands and will never forget seeing Chad's face on the florigraph as the float slowly rolled past them. Sheree and Mike say they are honored that Chad was chosen. Chad was one of two Texans portrayed on the Donate Life float.

Sheree and Mike Jones began Donate4Life, a nonprofit that raises awareness about organ donation in the community



Chad with his sister Jessica



A graduate of Cinco Ranch High School, Chad Jones had many loving friends and family members in the Katy community



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Jessica, Sheree, and Mike Jones meet Chad's heart recipient, Larry Johnson

The Heart of a Family

In 2010, Mike, Sheree, and Jessica were honored to meet Larry "Low-Note" Johnson, Chad's heart recipient. Johnson is a well-known Houston-area musician, as well as a beloved husband, father, and grandfather who had spent many days in the hospital waiting for a heart. Johnson received a new lease on life after receiving Chad's heart. "Before the transplant, Larry wasn't even able to sit up in bed," Sheree says. Today, Larry has a good prognosis and is back doing the things he loves; playing music and enjoying every moment with his family. Recently, the Jones family, along with many of Chad's friends and supporters, reunited to watch Larry perform at a Houston-area nightclub, with Chad's heart beating to the music. "Chad's legacy will live on through the recipients and through our wonderful memories of him," says Sheree.

Chad's Foundation

After Chad's death, the Jones family started the nonprofit organization, Donate4Life, named as a tribute to the four major organs that Chad donated (a heart, a liver, and two kidneys). The foundation has hosted various community benefits to raise awareness about organ donation. The family also started a scholarship fund for an immediate family member of someone who has donated an organ, as well as an organ recipient. To make a donation to this foundation and scholarship fund, visit donate4life.com. **KM**



Sadly, Texas has one of the lowest percentages of registered organ donors in the U.S. (only 5% of Texans are registered). Chad's personalized license plates were Just Go. In honor of Chad and the lives he saved, please register to become an organ donor. **JUST GO** to donatelifetx.org and register.

WENDY CLARK is a Katy freelance writer and blogger living in Katy with her husband, two daughters, and newborn son. Since writing about organ donation, she has registered to become a donor.

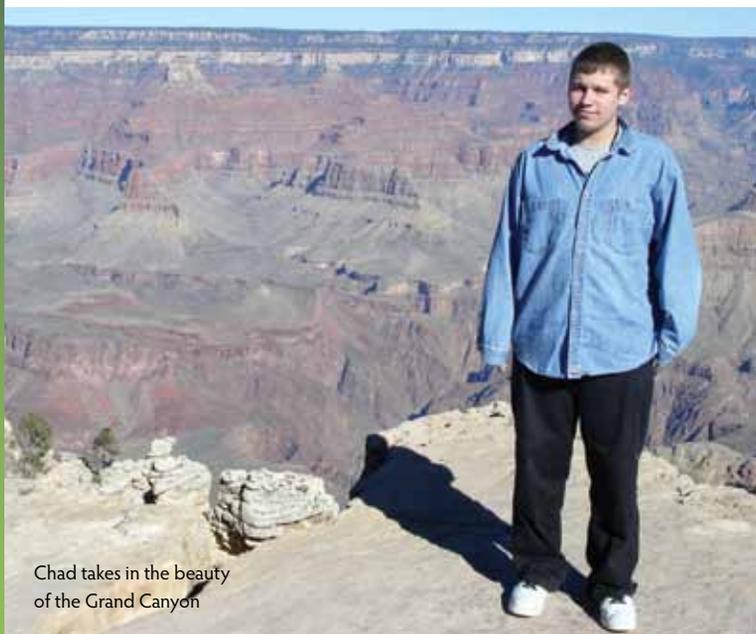
KATRINA KATSARELIS is the editor-in-chief of Katy Magazine. Her husband, Matt received a life-saving liver transplant last Easter at The Methodist Hospital. The Katsarelises are advocates of organ donation and hope to increase awareness about registration. Visit donatelifetx.org.



Jessica, Chad, and Mike enjoy a family vacation in Hawaii



Chad and his friends celebrate before the CRHS prom



Chad takes in the beauty of the Grand Canyon



Chad celebrates his birthday with his family and friends



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Remembering Chad

-  Graduated from Cinco Ranch High School, Class of 2006.
-  Favorite color was lime green (ironically, green is most often associated with organ donation organizations).
-  Loved to modify things, including a five-speed Honda Civic that he bought brand new, only to change the engine to a six-speed.
-  Favorite place to eat in Katy was El Jarrito's.
-  Loved going to car and motorcycle shows on the weekends.
-  Mayor Don Elder proclaimed Oct. 27 (Chad's birthday) as the Official Charles Jones Organ Donor Registration Day.



Chad helped save several lives in the Houston area through donation of his heart, liver, and kidneys

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