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**The Chris Klug Foundation Recognize Extraordinary Transplant Recipients with  
Bounce Back Give Back Award**

*Awards will be presented on December 5<sup>th</sup> at the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Summit for Life in Aspen, CO*

ASPEN, CO., August 3, 2020 – The Chris Klug Foundation (CKF) recently announced the two winners of their 2020 Bounce Back Give Back Awards. The annual award recognizes two organ transplant recipients who exhibit an outstanding quality of life post-transplant, whether it is through career accomplishments, participation in sports or hobbies, or simply leading fulfilling lives with their family and loved ones.

“The Bounce Back Give Back Award celebrates and emphasizes what is possible after transplant,” said Lauren Pierce, CKF Executive Director. “From leading a healthy, active life post-transplant to giving back to the transplant community. These individuals serve as valuable reminders that there is life after transplant—and it can be truly amazing.”

CKF received 42 nominations representing individuals from 18 states for this year’s award. A team of CKF reviewers selected the two winners. These two honorees will enjoy an all-expenses-paid trip to Aspen with one guest each for the award ceremony. Awards will be presented during CKF’s Summit for Life, on December 5, 2020. Due to safety concerns as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this year’s Summit for Life nighttime uphill race will take place on both Aspen and Snowmass Mountains and will have a limited number of entries for race participants. Social distancing measures will be taken as well. The Bounce Back Give Back Awards will be presented virtually at the conclusion of the race. All proceeds from the event will benefit CKF.

One of the Bounce Back Give Back Award winners this year is Joelle Atkinson, who was diagnosed with infantile polycystic kidney disease at birth. At just 10 months old, Joelle had both kidneys removed and was put on at-home dialysis. Her father donated one of his kidneys to her as a living donor eight months later.

Growing up, Joelle competed in dance competitions and led an active lifestyle, despite being unable to play contact sports. When she was eight years old, Joelle contracted pneumonia and the medication she had to take ended up damaging her liver and her kidneys so severely that she required transplants for both. While she was on the transplant waitlist for a new kidney/liver, Joelle competed in swimming, track and bowling at the [U.S. Transplant Games](#), an Olympics-style event for individuals who are waiting for or have gone through

lifesaving transplant surgeries. After nine long months, Joelle received a new kidney and new liver from a deceased donor.

Since her kidney/liver transplant, Joelle has competed in almost every year of the U.S. Transplant Games as well as two years at the [World Transplant Games](#), an international version of the U.S. Games. She won both Athlete of the Year and Coach of the Year in swimming for at the 2016 U.S. Games and she continues to lead an active lifestyle by regularly running 5Ks and 10Ks as well as completing five half-marathons. She also taught dance in college.

In addition to her athletic pursuits, Joelle interned for the [Gift of Life Donor Program](#), the largest organ procurement organization in the country, while she was in college. She is also the team captain for the organization's annual Donor Dash. Joelle now has a Master's Degree in Occupational Therapy and currently works with elementary and high school-age children with autism and other developmental disorders as an occupational therapist for a school district in southern New Jersey. She also works part-time in marketing for her family's business in New Jersey. In addition, Joelle volunteers at Camp Chihope with pediatric transplant recipients through the [Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh](#), where she used to be a counselor.

Joelle was recently married last year to her husband, Adam. She also wrote for [Philadelphia Magazine's](#) health and wellness blog about what social distancing means as a kidney/liver recipient during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as how she stays healthy through fitness and a balanced diet.

Tracy Copeland is the second winner of the 2020 Bounce Back Give Back Awards. Tracy is a liver transplant recipient from Nevada, who was perfectly healthy when she unexpectedly went into acute liver failure at 34 years old. After a month of experiencing strange symptoms and going through medical testing to determine the problem, she became comatose and required a liver transplant within hours to survive. Thankfully, a match was found. Tracy received her new liver from a deceased donor, Terry, who tragically passed away in a motorcycle accident not too long before saving Tracy's life.

On the one-year anniversary of her transplant, Tracy was able to meet her donor's family and they quickly became close friends. In 2001, her donor family told her about the U.S. Transplant Games. Shortly after first learning about the Games, Tracy began competing in the cycling, swimming, and track events and remains undefeated in her age group in cycling and the virtual triathlon competitions. At the 2006 U.S. Transplant Games, Tracy received the Outstanding Female Athlete Award with her donor family by her side. She has also represented Team USA at the World Transplant Games, both in Bangkok, Thailand, the Gold Coast, Australia, and Goteberg, Sweden, where she received a second Outstanding Athlete Award. Aside from the Transplant Games, Tracy has competed in multiple triathlons and marathons, including the Arizona Ironman, which she completed in under 13 hours. She continues to inspire others through her athletic endeavors post-transplant.

Although Tracy is employed as a Systems Advisor and Project Manager for FedEx Supply Chain logistics program full-time, she is also the founder and president of [Sierra Nevada Donor Awareness](#), a nonprofit organization that raises awareness of the importance and tremendous need for more organ and tissue donors nationwide, while honoring the lives of organ donors and their families. Tracy also created the foundation's annual "Donor Walk," which honors organ donors and raises funds for area families who have been affected by organ donation and transplant. The Walk is in its 13<sup>th</sup> year and the mother of Tracy's donor has participated every year since its inception. Tracy is grateful for her completely volunteer board and committee and is proud that Sierra Nevada Donor Awareness has since given back more than \$65,000 to the local community.

In addition to running her own organ donation nonprofit, Tracy volunteers with her local organ procurement organization, the [Nevada Donor Network](#), and has spoken to her community for National Donor Sabbath several times.

Both Bounce Back Give Back Award winners are committed to serving as Ambassadors for organ, eye and tissue donation in CKF's [Patient Ambassador Program](#). CKF Ambassadors visit with patients awaiting transplant, transplant recipients and their families in hospitals and transplant centers to provide encouragement in recovery and inspire recipients to make the most out of their second chance at life.

### **About the Chris Klug Foundation**

Founded in 2003, the Chris Klug Foundation (CKF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to educating others on the importance of organ, eye and tissue donation, inspiring those touched by transplant, and promoting organ donor registration nationwide. Chris Klug was diagnosed with primary sclerosing cholangitis, a rare disease for which a liver transplant is the only cure. Just 18 months after receiving a lifesaving liver transplant, he went on to win a medal in the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. Soon thereafter, Chris started the Chris Klug Foundation. Learn more about the foundation at [www.chrisklugfoundation.org](http://www.chrisklugfoundation.org).

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*Photos available upon request*