

EXPLORE OAK RIDGE NEWS RELEASE

Release Date: Immediate, September 25, 2017

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Explore Oak Ridge Employee, Steve Winfree, Ambassador for Organ Donation Awareness

Oak Ridge, TN – Explore Oak Ridge’s own, Steve Winfree, is a celebrity complete with a viral video although you will never hear him use the word ‘celebrity’ to describe himself. What had been his wife, Heather’s, simple act of posting a video of Steve’s reaction to life-changing news catapulted both he and Heather into the limelight. Using a custom-made Topps baseball card, Heather announced she was a kidney donation match to her husband who has suffered from kidney disease for 14 years. That evening, as Steve read the card out loud, his reaction was priceless and heart-warming. “When we woke the next morning, we had hundreds of notifications ranging from emails and texts to social media”, says Steve. “We knew then that the video could go viral.”

In the weeks that have followed, Steve and Heather have had numerous TV guest appearances and interviews worldwide including Good Morning America, ESPN, Fox News, CNN, Sports Illustrated, People Magazine, and ABC News just to name a few. They also will be appearing on The Harry Connick Jr Show in the near future. The video has had over 60 million views worldwide. The Winfreees have received messages of support from all over the world many of whom want to share with them their organ donation stories as well.

Steve is understandably very passionate about organ donation and hosts a blog that has chronicled his journey dealing with kidney disease and most recently, kidney failure, for the past 14 years. “We knew once the video had gone viral that we had been given a world-wide platform that we wanted to use to bring awareness to others who need organ donations”, says Steve.

Steve and Heather’s organ donation/transplant is now set for September 28th at Vanderbilt Medical in Nashville and they couldn’t be more excited. The Winfreees are teaming up with the East Tennessee Kidney Foundation (ETKF) and the Secret City Half Marathon & 5K event to help raise organ donation awareness. “I am inviting all people who are dealing with or have dealt with kidney disease or any other organ disease to walk the 5K course with me and cross the finish line to symbolize our victory over organ failure”, says Steve. The race is November 18th and donations to ETKF are being accepted during the registration process.

For more information about ETKF please visit <https://www.etkidney.org/>. To register for the Secret City Half Marathon & 5K event please visit <http://www.secretcityhalfmarathon.com/>.





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