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Heroic Boxer to Be Honored at Rose Bowl Parade

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Community members braved the cold Tuesday night, as they convened at the Garfield Park Field House for a candlelight vigil and press conference to honor the memory of, "The Aztec Kid" Francisco "Paco" Rodriguez, who at 25, died after sustaining injuries from a title bout in November 2009. "There is a lot of love here," said Paco's older brother Alex Rodriguez during the press conference. "I admire my brother and although he was my younger brother, I want to be more like him."



In memory of his selfless act, "The Aztec Kid," Francisco "Paco" Rodriguez, will be one of the 2 organ donors honored in the 2012 Rose Bowl Parade. His [illegible] Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network, will represent his family as one of the riders on the ninth Donate Life float. A vigil and press conference was held to honor the life of local hero, Francisco "Paco" Rodriguez on Tuesday night at the Garfield Park Field House. Deputy Consul General of Mexico Agustin Rodriguez de la Gala, Raiza Mendoza, Latino Affairs coordinator for Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network, Widow Sonia Rodriguez, and fellow boxers were in attendance to share Paco's story and legacy.

Paco, a former resident of Cicero, was a proud Mexican-American who came from a family of boxers. Trained by his father, Paco became a Chicago hometown favorite winning the 2001 national Golden Gloves championship title at age 17. He also was a five-time Chicago Golden Gloves champion and competed in the 2004 U.S. Olympic trials. "He was a man with so much talent and love for his sport," said Rita "La Guerra" Figueroa. "He was so kind. He was someone who was dedicated to his craft and it was an honor for me to be able to see him in the ring."

Paco was also known for his selfless gift. As an organ and tissue donor, Paco was able to save the lives of five individuals, one of whom was his uncle who received one of his kidneys. "We are here to not only honor the memory of Paco, but to educate families on what it means to be an organ donor and to eliminate the fear that is associated with organ donation," said A[illegible] Rodriguez de la Gala, deputy Consul General of Mexico. .gustin "To be able to save the life of another human being is a beautiful thing. It is one of the greatest gifts an individual can share."

Due to his legacy and heroic act, Paco, along with 28 other organ donors from around the country, will be honored at the 2012 Rose Bowl Parade on January 2, 2012. Alex Rodriguez, in partnership with the Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network, will represent his family as a featured rider on the ninth Donate Life float in the parade. A "floragraph" portrait of Paco, made entirely of organic floral materials, will be featured on a large floral timepiece that demonstrates the precious time family members have with their loved ones.

According to Gift of Hope, more than 112,000 candidates are on the national organ transplant waiting list and there are nearly 5,000 waiting in Illinois. A single donor can save the lives of eight people through organ donation. "As painful as it is not to have him here, I know through his kind act, his legacy will live on," said Widow Sonia Rodriguez. Reverend Marco Mercado, director of Hispanic Ministry of the Archdiocese of Chicago as well as Paco's family, friends, and fellow boxers, ended the ceremony with a pray. Later family members and Gift of Hope representatives invited community members to share their stories of the beloved boxer.

If you are interested in learning more about organ donation, call Gift of Hope at 630-758-2744. Or visit, www.giftofhope.org.

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