



PRESS RELEASE

**\$125,000 Check Presented to Make-A-Wish
Texas Gulf Coast and Louisiana Chapter by Houston Spine Surgeon
Dr. Mike Leahy as Local Make-A-Wish Kid “Cj” Is Celebrated**

**Dr. Leahy Responsible for nearly \$200K and 25 Houston Make-A-Wish
Wishes Granted to Date Through Spinal Elements’ “Pledge to Be a Hero”
Program; Creates Endowment for Future Houston Wish Grantees**

HOUSTON, TX – July 19, 2017. Seventeen-year-old “CJ,” a Houston-area Wish Kid with Cystic Fibrosis, just received his special Wish this month, thanks to Texas Orthopaedic & Sports Medicine spine surgeon Mike Leahy, M.D. Dr. Leahy, a leading surgeon for multiple high school athletic programs in the community, is the first surgeon in Texas to join national spine technology company Spinal Elements’ “Pledge to Be a Hero” program, and because of this is responsible for helping to generate donations of up to \$200,000 for the local Houston Make-A-Wish chapter, making the equivalent of nearly 25 wishes come true for local kids. Dr. Leahy presented his fifth donation check totaling \$125,000 to the Make-A-Wish Texas Gulf Coast and Louisiana chapter on Tuesday, July 18th at 12 pm at a special hero-themed ceremony honoring CJ at St. Luke’s Lakeside Hospital in the Woodlands.

At the ceremony, Dr. Leahy and the Make-A-Wish Texas Gulf Coast and Louisiana chapter team celebrated CJ’s homecoming from his Wish, which was made possible last month by Dr. Leahy. CJ is a huge race car driving fan, and his Wish was to visit the Ebisu Drift School in Japan where he could not only satisfy his love for cars, but could also watch professional race car drivers drive them. He was also very interested in eating sushi while there! Both CJ and his sister are Make-A-Wish recipients; his sister, now 20 and who also suffers from cystic fibrosis, was a former Wish kid who went to Disney World in 2003. At the post-wish celebration, CJ was presented a Hero medal, and Dr. Leahy, Spinal Elements and the Make-A-Wish Texas Gulf Coast and Louisiana chapter announced the creation of the Dr. Michael Leahy Spinal Elements Endowment, a special fund from which wishes will be granted for many lifetimes to come.

The California-based company Spinal Elements launched its national “Pledge to Be a Hero” program in 2012, offering surgeons and hospitals across the country the opportunity to pledge to use only allograft tissue from companies that do not profit from the transfer of that tissue whenever clinically feasible. Allograft tissue is bone graft material used in spinal fusion surgery that comes from deceased donors via a tissue bank. Although many companies earn significant profits from the sale of allograft, Spinal Elements has chosen to donate 100% of the net proceeds from the sale of its Hero Allograft to charities benefitting children with life-threatening medical conditions, such as the Make-A-Wish Foundation® and St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.

Dr. Leahy hopes his support will encourage other surgeons and hospitals to use Hero Allograft and thereby significantly expand the reach of both Make-A-Wish and St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.

“Because of Hero Allograft, I feel that with one procedure, we are able to double the impact. We get to heal patients using superior medicine and also support children suffering some of the worst medical conditions. I’m thankful I can do my part and urge my colleagues across the country to do the same,” commented Dr. Leahy.

Spinal Elements chose to name its first allograft tissue product “Hero®” to honor those whose tissue donation made the gift of life possible. Hero was launched in 2012 at the North American Spine Society (NASS) convention. Spinal Elements has now donated nearly \$1.2M since, and is endeavoring to continue scaling its donations through ongoing growth of the Hero program.

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