



spotlight on health

Living Proof That Bone Marrow Registration Saves Lives

(NAPSA)—Every year, more than 10,000 people are diagnosed with life-threatening diseases that can be treated with a bone marrow transplant.

Unfortunately, most will never find a match. According to the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP), a nonprofit organization that registers potential donors, thousands could be treated each year if more Americans took a surprisingly simple step.

Meet Matthew

Three-year-old Matthew Welling's family knows about waiting for a match. At a year old, Matthew was diagnosed with the often fatal disease of osteopetrosis, but thanks to registered donor Steve Karas, a bone marrow transplant saved his life. "It was a relatively easy and painless procedure," Karas said. "It was an amazing opportunity and something that has changed my life."

More Donors Needed

After learning how Karas, an Aflac sales agent, saved Matthew's life, his company wanted to help. Aflac president and COO Paul Amos, a registered donor, spearheaded an initiative with the NMDP to register as many Aflac employees and sales agents as possible.

"More and more, we are seeing this as a course of treatment, yet many people still cannot get matches. In fact, 61 percent of people applying for bone marrow are



Young Matthew Welling owes his life to Steve Karas, who started out a stranger willing to donate his bone marrow. Now the Welling family and Karas are the closest of friends.

unable to get it," Amos said. Statistics show that for certain minority groups, the odds of finding a matching donor are even worse.

To date, Aflac has registered employees and sales agents ranging in the thousands, which Dr. William G. Woods, medical director for the Aflac Cancer Center in Atlanta, says is just what the doctor ordered. "Children who need a bone marrow transplant often don't have family matches that work. We have to rely on bone marrow registries." More registration drives are scheduled throughout the country.

Learn More

To find out more about bone marrow donation, how you can help and how it may help you, visit Matthewwelling.org.