

## Public Cord Blood Donation: Giving Birth to Hope

(NAPSA)—The birth of a child begins a new life, but it can also be a lifeline for someone else. That's because umbilical cord blood—like marrow—is rich in blood-forming cells that can be used to treat patients with leukemia, lymphoma and many other diseases.

Despite this life-saving potential, the majority of newborns' umbilical cords are discarded—demonstrating a pressing need for greater awareness and education about public cord blood donation.

Many expectant parents can donate their babies' cord blood to a public cord blood bank. Cord blood is collected from the umbilical cord and placenta immediately after a baby is born. It is stored at a public cord blood bank and the cord blood unit is listed on the Be The Match Registry, operated by the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP).

Every year, thousands of patients and their doctors depend on the Be The Match Registry to find a matched unrelated cord blood unit or adult marrow donor—patients such as Steven Gonzalez, Jr., who was diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia when he was just 12 years old. Fortunately, the young boy's doctors were able to identify two donated cord blood units on the Be The Match Registry, and Steven received a life-saving cord blood transplant in 2007.

Thanks to families that generously donated their children's cord blood to a public cord blood bank, Steven is thriving in school and Boy Scouts. His parents will be forever grateful.

"There are no words to express



**The Gonzalez family (starting at the top), Sabrina, Steve, Rosie, and Steven Jr., are grateful to the parents who donated their babies' umbilical cord blood to a public bank. Steven received a cord blood transplant two years ago to treat a rare form of leukemia.**

how thankful we are. The parents who donated their babies' cord blood saved our son's life. We just wish more people knew how easy it is to donate, and what a wonderful gift it truly is," his mother said.

As a treatment option, cord blood is especially useful because:

- More patients can find a suitable unrelated match because cord blood tissue-type matching does not need to be as biologically close as marrow for a transplant; and
- Donated cord blood is stored and readily available, so it is useful for patients who need a transplant quickly.

The NMDP has seen tremendous growth over the last few years in the number of cord blood transplants it has facilitated. While many patients find the

match they need, more donations will help ensure that all patients have access to this potentially life-saving treatment.

Public banks are in particular need of donated cord blood from parents of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. Because tissue types are inherited, patients are more likely to match someone who shares their racial or ethnic heritage. With a smaller pool of potential donors representing these backgrounds, racially and ethnically diverse patients can have a harder time finding a suitable match.

Unfortunately, despite the need for increased donations, donation is not an option in every hospital. Expectant parents can visit [www.BeTheMatch.org/cord](http://www.BeTheMatch.org/cord) for a list of participating hospitals to see if their delivery hospital works with a public cord blood bank. There is no cost for parents to donate cord blood, and donating cord blood does not change the delivery experience.

If expectant parents cannot donate at their delivery hospital, there are other ways to help:

- Contact the NMDP at (800) MARROW-2 (1-800-627-7692) or visit [www.BeTheMatch.org/cord](http://www.BeTheMatch.org/cord) to learn about other possible ways to donate.
- Ask their hospital if it collects cord blood donations for research purposes. Research leads to new treatments that can benefit more patients in the future.
- Consider other ways to help patients; contribute money to the Be The Match Foundation or join the Be The Match Registry as a volunteer marrow donor.