



Health Awareness

Hope For Those In Need Of A Marrow Or Blood Cell Transplant

(NAPSA)—An organization that makes life-saving marrow or blood cell transplants possible has reached a significant milestone—the facilitation of its 20,000th transplant. The National Marrow Donor Program® (NMDP) connects patients, doctors, donors and researchers to the resources they need to help more people live longer and healthier lives. To achieve its mission, it:

- Searches its Registry—the largest listing of volunteer donors and cord blood units in the world.
- Supports patients and their doctors throughout the transplant process.
- Matches patients with the best donor or cord blood unit using innovative science and technology.

Before the NMDP was formed in 1987, patients in need of a marrow or blood cell transplant faced near certain death if a sibling donor was not available. Today, thanks to the facilitation that the NMDP and its leading Network members provides to make marrow and blood cell transplant therapy available, thousands of people who once faced deadly diseases can affirm, “I’m still here.” As the NMDP marks the milestone of its 20,000th transplant, there are 20,000 stories to tell—inspiring stories, such as:

• Raul Gonzalez, a Southern California construction apprentice who recovered from leukemia and changed careers. Instead of building homes and high-rises, Raul chose to build the diversity of the NMDP Registry—his job is to recruit Hispanic donors and other people of color to the Registry;

• Seattle Police Sergeant Randy Yamanaka, who became a life-saving donor and won the sup-



Thousands of people like Diego Lara have been helped by the National Marrow Donor Program which connects donors to patients for life-giving marrow and blood cell transplants.

port of Washington Governor Gary Locke after prompting a change in city law that now allows Washington state government executive agency employees paid leave for marrow or blood cell donation;

• Valerie Sun, who was just 11 when she learned of her aplastic anemia. She was told her only hope for long-term survival would be a marrow or blood cell transplant. She was also told that her Chinese and Caucasian ethnic heritage would make finding an unrelated marrow donor whose tissue type would match hers difficult but the NMDP was able to secure a suitable match through ongoing education and recruitment activities. Today, she is 22 years old, holds a degree from the University of Southern California and is in the first year of a career in marketing communications;

• Donor extraordinaire Mary Halet, who has donated bone marrow, peripheral blood (blood-form-

ing cells harvested from the bloodstream) and umbilical cord blood—all three sources of the life-giving cells.

In addition to linking with international registries, the NMDP also offers patients a range of donor possibilities including both marrow and cord blood. When four-year-old Diego Lara was searching for a match to treat his acute lymphocytic leukemia, his doctors looked at the range of donor possibilities offered by the NMDP. The search identified several cord blood units and unrelated donors for Diego who could be potential matches. When Diego relapsed, a unit of cord blood was typed and put on hold for him, knowing Diego would need to go to transplant very quickly. The availability of matching cells through the NMDP Registry and the recognition on the part of doctors that they should be ready to go to transplant quickly helped save Diego’s life.

A critical factor which contributed to Diego’s recovery is his doctor’s ability to find a suitable unit of umbilical cord blood on the NMDP Registry. In a special recruitment project in 2002 led by the NMDP and supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration, the number of diverse ethnic and racial cord blood units listed on the NMDP Registry grew by nearly 22 percent—from 7,400 to 9,000. One of these units was Diego’s source for the necessary life-saving cells.

To learn more about how you can help support the search to make life-saving transplants a reality for all patients in need, visit www.marrow.org or call 1 (800) MARROW-2.