

# UNUSUAL HEROES

## African Americans Give The Gift Of Life

(NAPSA)—Life can change in a moment. Just ask Patricia Murray. Her life changed forever when she was told she had the life-threatening disease leukemia.

“It was the darkest and toughest time of my life,” Murray said. “I was a single mother with two kids. My youngest daughter was still in high school. I couldn’t believe the diagnosis at first.” A second opinion confirmed the diagnosis. After trying other treatment options in hopes of curing the leukemia, Murray’s doctors realized that her only chance for survival would be a marrow or blood stem cell transplant. The transplant would require matching certain tissue traits of the donor and patient. Because the characteristics that determine whether a donor and patient match are inherited, Murray’s best chance of finding a matched donor was from another African American. Her family could not provide a suitable match, however. Her last hope was a donor not related to her. A search of the National Marrow Donor Program® (NMDP) Registry revealed a donor.

“When I was told they had found me a donor, I was ecstatic. My prayers were answered,” Murray said. She had her transplant in June 1999 and is now leading a healthy life. “When the marrow arrived at the hospital and it was transfused into my body, I watched as it slowly seeped into my system. It represented the rest of my life. Nobody would know, looking at me today, that I was ever sick,” Murray said. “My donor saved my life. She gave my kids their mother back. If it



**Thanks to a bone marrow transplant, Patricia Murray continues to live a healthy life despite a diagnosis of leukemia.**

weren’t for my donor, I may not be here today,” Murray said.

Although Murray’s battle with leukemia was a tough fight for her, the experience has transformed her. “I value life much more. I don’t take anything for granted anymore,” she said. Murray hopes to meet her donor some day to thank her in person for her gift of life.

Helping someone in need was what Althea Hinton, Murray’s donor, wanted to do. “Donating marrow was an opportunity for me to save someone’s life. I would do it again in a heartbeat,” Hinton said. “It could have been a family member who needed help. If you would help a family member, why not help others who are also in need? I encourage everyone to become donors because they could save someone’s life.”

The NMDP salutes and thanks African-American heroes, such as Hinton, who help patients find

hope for survival of a life-threatening disease such as leukemia. Together, African-American donors across the country and the NMDP make history each day. The NMDP is appealing to African Americans to become potential volunteers on the NMDP Registry. Although more African American patients are finding donors for their transplants, they are still less likely than Caucasians to identify a matched donor. More African Americans are needed as volunteer donors, so others can have a second chance at life. “I am living proof a transplant works and why African Americans need to join the Registry,” Murray said.

Created in 1986, the Minneapolis-based NMDP facilitates unrelated marrow and blood stem cell transplants for the treatment of leukemia and more than 70 other diseases through an extensive network of national and international partners. It recruits committed donors, maintains the largest and most diverse registry of potential volunteer donors in the world and offers patient services. At least 140 patients receive stem cell transplants through the NMDP each month. The NMDP’s Registry contains more than 4.5 million volunteers and is the only one that searches all three sources of stem cells available: marrow, peripheral blood and umbilical cord blood. By the end of 2001, the NMDP facilitated more than 13,000 transplants throughout the world.

For more information about the NMDP, how to become a donor or marrow and blood stem cell transplantation, call 1-800-MARROW-2 or log onto [www.marrow.org](http://www.marrow.org).