

## African Americans Continue Black History By Giving The Gift Of Life

(NAPS)—Thomas Hall loves cars. His love of cars brought him to the Chicago Auto Show. Little did he know that the visit would result in his giving the gift of life to someone he didn't even know. Hall made the decision to join the National Marrow Donor Program® (NMDP) Registry at a donor drive sponsored by Saturn and United Auto Workers' annual National Donor Day, held at the Chicago Auto Show, a few years ago.

Meanwhile, halfway across the country, Charlie Johnson, a 51-year-old man from Virginia, was struggling with leukemia. He needed an unrelated volunteer marrow or blood stem cell donor for his life-saving 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, Johnson's best chance of finding a matched donor was with another African American.

A search of the NMDP Registry revealed a donor. The donor was Thomas Hall a man from Illinois. Johnson had his transplant and is now living a healthy life. Recently, Hall had the opportunity to meet the man he saved on the nationally syndicated Sally Jessy Raphael Show.

"Helping Charlie has made me a better person. I have never been in a position to help someone. I was able to do something good and I would do it again. Charlie



**Tom Hall was invited back to the Chicago Auto Show to speak about his experience donating marrow.**

has a part of me and we are a part of each other now," he said. "I strongly encourage people, especially African Americans, to become volunteer donors. There aren't enough people helping those in need. The haves should help the have-nots."

Black History Month, held each February, is a time of honoring the contributions of African Americans. During this month-long celebration, the NMDP salutes and thanks African-American heroes, such as Hall, who help patients find hope for survival of a potentially fatal blood disease. Together, African American donors across the country and

the NMDP make history each day.

The NMDP is appealing to African Americans to continue black history by becoming 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.

Created in 1986, the Minneapolis-based NMDP is a non-profit organization that facilitates marrow and blood stem cell transplants for patients with life-threatening blood diseases who do not have matching donors in their families. Currently, the NMDP facilitates more than 130 transplants each month. The NMDP provides a single point of access for all sources of blood stem cells used in transplantation: marrow, peripheral blood and umbilical cord blood. The Registry is able to search its own database and provide physicians with information on multiple stem cell sources for life-saving transplants. Since it began operations in 1987, the NMDP has recruited a diverse Registry of four million potential volunteer marrow and blood stem cell donors and provided transplants to more than 11,000 patients.

For more information about the NMDP, call 1-800-MARROW-2 or visit the NMDP online at [www.marow.org](http://www.marow.org).