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**“Be The Match” Bone
Marrow Registry Drive on
February 26 at the
University of Maine at
Augusta**

Press Release

February 10, 2015 -- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“BE A HERO. BE THE MATCH. SAVE A LIFE.”

AUGUSTA, Maine – The public is invited to a **“Be The Match” Bone Marrow Registry Drive on Thursday, February 26 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.** in the lobby of the Randall Student Center on the campus of the **University of Maine at Augusta.**

Across the United States, more than a million people suffer from a variety of syndromes and cancers of the blood, including Globoid-Cell Leukodystrophy, Leukemia, Metachromatic Leukodystrophy, Multiple Myeloma, Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma, and Severe Combined Immunodeficiency.

The names of these diseases may be strange, but there’s a stark truth behind them: without a **bone marrow transplant** from a matching donor, **people with these diseases will die.** With a bone marrow transplant from a matching donor, **many of these people will live.**

The difference between life and death is a quick, simple, painless cheek swab to test whether a donor’s tissue type matches the type of someone in need. For those in the prime age range of 18-44 for healthy marrow, there is no cost to join the registry. A simple search of the registry connects patients to donors, and the Be the Match Foundation pays all outstanding expenses associated with donation.

“There are so many choices we have to face in life that are hard,” explains University of Maine at Augusta Assistant Professor James Cook, who is co-sponsoring this year’s drive with the Be the Match Foundation. “How do we raise our children? How do we grow our economy? How do we protect our environment? Those are hard questions. But it’s easy to be a hero. All you have to do is stop by and take a moment to get your cheek swabbed. You could save someone’s life.”

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Cook was inspired to organize this month's bone marrow registry drive after his wife, Tracy Jalbuena, was diagnosed earlier this year with the blood cancer multiple myeloma. A mother of two and emergency room physician in Midcoast Maine, Dr. Jalbuena needs a bone marrow transplant to save her life but has been unable to find a match, either in her family or in the national bone marrow registry. To save her life, a matching donor must join the registry. Dr. Jalbuena and her family are not giving up. "I know that someone out there is a match for me," she explains. "We just need to find that person."

As a health care professional, Dr. Jalbuena knows the need is great. "It's not just about me. There are so many people waiting for a donor," she says. "The beautiful thing about joining the bone marrow registry is that you might sign up in honor of one person, but end up saving someone else. Even if you aren't my match, you could help someone else who is in dire need."

For more information about the February 26 event, please contact James Cook at 207-621-3190 or james.m.cook@maine.edu. If you cannot attend the drive on February 26 and are interested in joining the registry through the mail, please visit <http://join.BeTheMatch.org/marrowmeTracy> online.

Fact Sheet: Joining the National Bone Marrow Registry and the Donating Process

- **Joining the Registry is simple.** Visit <http://bethematch.org/Support-the-Cause/Donate-bone-marrow/Join-the-marrow-registry/> to find a registration drive near you or order a cheek swab kit in the mail. A sample of your cells is taken from a cheek swab and tested for human leukocyte antigens (HLA) – the markers that tell doctors whether you are a match for someone in need.
- **The Need is Greatest for Non-White and Multi-Racial Donors, but Everyone Should Join.** Different HLA markers are more common in different racial and ethnic groups, which is why matches usually come from people who share the same heritage. The likelihood of matching for patients from numerically smaller racial and ethnic groups is lower than for White donors simply because there are fewer donors likely to carry the same HLA markers. If you are a member of a racial or ethnic minority, it is especially important for you to join the bone marrow registry to boost those odds. However, HLA markers of all sorts are found within every racial and ethnic group, which means there is a chance for everyone to help anybody by joining the registry.
- **You Don't Have to Pay a Penny to Donate.** Roughly 1 in 40 people who join the registry end up being a match for a patient in need. If you are a match, travel and medical expenses associated with your donation are covered, either by the patient's medical insurance or by the National Bone Marrow Registry. The cost of adding a person to the registry is about \$100, but the National Bone Marrow Registry waives that cost for healthy patients aged 18-44.
- **Donating may not be as Hard as you might Think.** The most common donation for multiple myeloma patients is peripheral blood stem cell donation. In PBSC, donors receive injections to boost their production of blood stem cells. Those stem cells are harvested for donation from a needle in your arm in a process that in most respects resembles a blood donation.

For more information, visit BeTheMatch.Org.

Media Links: Blog Posts, Photographs and Videos

To help spread the word and personalize the difficulties of multiple myeloma and bone marrow matching, we have placed photos, videos and blog posts on the web that we hope you may find of use. We would be pleased if you would elect to use these materials for any non-profit purpose associated with the issues of multiple myeloma, bone marrow matching, or bone marrow/stem cell transplantation. Direct links to these resources are:

Blog posts: <http://marrowme.wordpress.com>

Photographs: <http://marrowme.wordpress.com/photos/>

Videos: <http://marrowme.wordpress.com/videos/>

If you would are interested in some rewritten or remixed form of blog posts or videos, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Tracy Jalbuena and James Cook