



Bone Marrow Drives in Bridgewater, NJ by Shreya Nuli

About me and what I intend to give back to our community?

This is Shreya Nuli. I am a sophomore at the Bridgewater Raritan High School, NJ.

In the recent most years I have seen some of our close friends go through extra-ordinary life changing events such as Cancer, especially Blood Cancer. I have seen first-hand how such events can transpire so quickly to a "**Race of Life against Time**", especially when they are in dire need of a Bone Marrow Transplant. After a bit of research online, I figured I have the potential and means to contribute positively and give back to the community. Thus, my cause to volunteer to conducting the Bone Marrow Drives in our community in collaboration with National Bone Marrow Drive (NMDP) organization took shape.

What is a Bone Marrow Drive? How does this benefit the community at large?

Many cases of Blood Cancer diagnosed patients have to undergo Bone Marrow Transplant. In which case the odds of finding a match is pretty slim.

One of the non-profit organizations called Be-The-Match (Formerly, NMDP - National Marrow Donor Program) helps maintain a National Registry of Database with Donor Marrow information. When a patient in need of a match is fighting against time he/she is searched for a match against the Donor Marrow Database.

To put things in context with some Stats:

- Each year, leukemia kills more children than any other cancer.
- This year, more than 130,000 Americans will be diagnosed with a serious blood disease.
- Leukemia (a blood cancer) will strike 44,000 Americans this year, including 3,500 children. It will kill about half of the adults and about 700 of the children.
- Only 30 percent of patients who need a bone marrow transplant have a matching donor in their families.
- The remaining 70 percent must hope that a compatible stranger can be found using the national registry.
- At any given time, about 7,500 Americans are actively searching the national registry for an unrelated donor.
- **Only 2 percent of population is on the national registry.**
- A significant number of those on the national bone marrow registry cannot be located or will not donate when asked to do so. The percentages of donors who are available and willing are: 65 for Caucasians; 47 percent for Hispanics; 44 percent for Asians; 34 percent for African-Americans.
- Multi-racial people face the worst odds.
- At least 3,000 people die each year because they cannot find a matching donor.
- Donating bone marrow is safe: More than 35,000 people have donated bone marrow to a stranger without a single donor death.

It is pretty evident from the above that the community at large will benefit significantly, if the Donor Registry has more willing members sign-up to save precious lives. What better can we give than the "Gift of Life".

To that effect, I want to volunteer to conduct Marrow Drives to help facilitate increase the odds of finding a match in need.

What is Involved?

- A bone marrow transplant can save someone's life who is battling leukemia, lymphoma, or another blood cancer. You can fight cancer just by swabbing your cheek with a Q-tip.
- To register as a bone marrow donor, a person swabs the inside of his or her cheek in order to provide the DNA needed to identify if he or she is a bone marrow match for someone.
- To be a bone marrow donor in America, a person should be between 18 and 60 years old and in good health.
- Once a Match is determined, a bone marrow donation happens in one of two ways:
 - In the first, blood is drawn from a donor's arm, put in a machine where stem cells are separated, and returned through the other arm. 70 percent of marrow donations use peripheral blood stem cell apheresis.
 - In the other, marrow cells are extracted from the hip bone. 30 percent of marrow donations use the traditional method of putting a needle in your hip.
- Bone marrow donation requires less than five percent of marrow cells.
- After donation, bone marrow replaces itself within four to six weeks.
- Donors giving from their hip bones are put under anesthesia, and therefore they do not feel pain during the collection procedure.
- Young people 18 to 25 years old are the bone marrow donors needed most.
- After being placed on the registry, you may be contacted in a matter of months, or not for many years, or not at all.

How did I get this far?

I have been working in conjunction with Be-the-Match (National Donor Marrow Program), a non-profit organization to help support their over-arching cause in helping conduct drives in our community by volunteering my time to make a difference in the community. The Township of Bridgewater (Mayor's office, Health Dept & Library) have been exceptionally supportive and encouraged this noble cause, without which I would not have come this far to conduct the drives right here in our Bridgewater Library.

Schedule of Marrow Drive Dates?

I plan to conduct the Marrow drives once a month at Bridgewater Library between the hours of 3- 4PM. And what better month to start than the Bone Marrow Awareness month – November.

Following are the scheduled dates for now:

- November 19th 2017
- December 10th 2017
- January 7th 2018
- February 11th 2018
- March 18th 2018
- April 22nd 2018
- May 20th 2018
- June 24th, 2018

Sources:

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