

A B C D E F G H Children's Health

A Program That Offers Hope To Young People Facing A Transplant

(NAPSA)—There's hopeful news for young people with a life-threatening disease such as leukemia, lymphoma or other genetic disorders that are often treated with a marrow or cord blood transplant.

Survival rates for childhood cancer have increased dramatically in recent decades. In fact, one in 250 adults under the age of 45 will be a childhood cancer survivor by the year 2010. But as survivors, these young people face a daunting array of challenges. After transplant, which includes radiation and chemotherapy, survivors are behind in school and face a long, arduous recovery.

The good news is that these patients and their families can turn to the National Marrow Donor Program® (NMDP) for help and support through every step of the transplant journey.

Through its Office of Patient Advocacy, the NMDP has developed "Forward"—a program designed to help teenagers and young adults learn about and understand the challenges of living with life-threatening diseases, such as leukemia, and life after a marrow transplant.

For example, there is the story of a young man named Joe Smith. He was leading a normal life in Bloomington, Minn., where he enjoyed swimming, golfing and fishing, until he was diagnosed with aplastic anemia—a condition most effectively treated with a



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Smith received a lifesaving marrow transplant at age 15 and then spent months in the hospital recovering. Today, he is getting back on track, but it was a challenging road that led him there.

"Going through a transplant is really difficult and everyone has a different way of coping. The important thing is to express how you're feeling to your family and friends," said Dr. Margaret MacMillan, transplant physician.

Said Smith, "I did not have energy sometimes. I mean it was a chore for me just to get out of bed and walk over to the bathroom, which was maybe like 10

feet from my bed."

Survivors such as Smith often make remarkable comebacks, but, thankfully, he didn't have to do it alone. In this case, his friends were a huge part of his recovery. Said Smith, "I knew they were there, and I could hear them joking around and I still felt like I was a part of that, even though I wasn't saying or contributing anything. Just knowing they were there really helped."

Resources to help survivors cope with the new, often frightening world they face after a serious illness can be minimal. Fortunately, Smith had access to and also participated in the "Forward" program.

This program helps other teenagers going through similar situations understand and cope with issues such as living with cancer, special concerns for teenage cancer survivors and how to make the transition back into everyday life, such as school and relationships after a marrow transplant.

"I consider myself one of the lucky ones," said Smith. "There are many patients who are having a more difficult time than I am. Someday, I hope they find a cure for childhood diseases and cancer so no kid will have to go through what so many others and I have gone through." To learn more, visit www.marrow.org or contact the Office of Patient Advocacy at 1-888-999-6743.