

Health Bulletin

Cancer Survivors Choose To Give Back

(NAPSA)—*This heartwarming and courageous story of two cancer survivors will reach out to many Americans who have been touched and changed by a disease they have conquered.*

A few years ago, Leandra Argiros and Becky Christy were facing the possibility that tomorrow may never come. These days, Leandra and Becky are living life filled with smiles, laughter, joy and lots of hugs.

None of these life moments would be possible if it weren't for their courage, faith and determination at surviving and beating their disease. With the help of successful blood stem cell transplants facilitated by the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP), and two strangers who saved their lives by donating healthy blood stem cells to them, Leandra and Becky plan to use their second chance at life by making a difference in the lives of others who must walk the same path they did.

Thirteen-year-old Leandra plans to use her second chance at life by saving lives just as her physician at the NMDP Transplant Center in Boston's Dana Farber/Partners Cancer Care did for her. "When I grow up, I want to go to Harvard Medical School to become a pediatric hematologist," Leandra said. This past spring, Leandra, a gifted student who lives in New Port Richey located in the Tampa area, was inducted in the National Junior Honor Society.



At least 140 patients receive stem-cell transplants through the registry each month.

"When Leandra was diagnosed with myelodysplastic syndrome at age 11, I thought I was going to lose her. Now, thanks to a successful transplant and her donor, Leandra is able to live her life and use her life to better the lives of others. I am so very proud of her," Connie Argiros, Leandra's mother, said.

For Becky, surviving her non-Hodgkins lymphoma meant giving back to others. "My successful transplant means everything to me. The transplant enabled me to continue to raise my family," Becky said.

When she turned 50, instead of birthday presents, Becky and her family asked guests at her birthday party to donate money to Iowa Marrow Donor Program, an NMDP Donor Center, so that more people

could join the NMDP Registry. "I was fortunate to have a second chance at life. Hopefully, this will give someone else their second chance at life," she said. Becky has since returned to work as a busy language arts teacher in Iowa.

The NMDP is committed to its mission to extend and improve life through innovative stem-cell therapies. As of May 31, 2002, the NMDP has facilitated more than 14,000 transplants throughout the world for patients with life-threatening diseases such as leukemia and aplastic anemia, as well as certain immune system and genetic disorders. The NMDP is the only organization that offers searching patients who do not have suitable family donors a single point of access for all three types of stem cells used in transplantation: marrow, peripheral blood and umbilical cord blood.

Through its extensive U.S. and international Network, the NMDP manages the largest and most diverse Registry of volunteer donors, including more than 20,000 cord blood units. Matching donors to patients is only part of NMDP's lifesaving mission. The NMDP also provides support for patients and physicians and conducts research studies aimed at increasing opportunities for and improving the outcomes of stem cell transplants.

For more information about blood stem-cell transplantation or how you can help, call the NMDP at 1-800-MARROW-2 or online at www.marrow.org.