

# Children's Health Bulletin

## New Design For Helping Kids Beat Cancer And Blood Disorders

(NAPSA)—While for most young people the teen years are challenging enough, for some, there are further complications—and one such young woman turned those into a way to help others.

### The Problem

Here's her story: Michelle Nguyen from Johns Creek, Georgia has a rare blood disorder called thalassemia.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people with thalassemia have a genetic defect of their red blood cells that affects the cells' ability to produce normal hemoglobin. Red blood cells use hemoglobin to carry oxygen to tissues. As a result of the defect, most forms of thalassemia produce a chronic, lifelong anemia.

Nguyen's had it since she can remember and needs routine blood transfusions to maintain her strength. Every three weeks or so, she and her mother are off to the Aflac Cancer & Blood Disorders Center in Atlanta to go through a process that should never be "routine" for a 14-year-old, but like most child patients, she takes it in stride.

What Nguyen really needs is a bone marrow transplant, but in order to have that procedure, she needs to find a match, which is no easy task, especially for someone of Asian descent. In spite of the efforts of such celebrities as Robin Roberts of "Good Morning America," who have championed the cause, Asians and African-Americans are not well represented on the national bone marrow registry. There are 10.5 million potential donors on the list and only about 7 percent are Asian and another 7 percent are African-American.



**Michelle Nguyen and the adorable holiday duck she designed to help raise money for childhood cancer facilities.**

Sixty-seven percent of potential donors on the list are white.

### The Duck

Recently, while at the cancer center for her treatments, Nguyen entered a contest to design the annual Aflac Holiday Duck for the 2013 season. Every year, the insurance company produces a plush duck and sells it online at [www.Aflaholidayduck.com](http://www.Aflaholidayduck.com) and at participating Macy's stores. All the net proceeds go to the nearest participating childhood cancer facility to where it was purchased. So far, the program has raised more than \$3 million of the \$83 million that Aflac has come up with for childhood cancer.

Nguyen was thrilled to know that her design won the contest and so will help other kids who are going through the same types of trials that she goes through. She wants to use her newfound stardom to amplify the need for marrow donors, the need for improved childhood cancer treatments and additional research.

### How To Get It

Nguyen's Holiday Duck comes in both a 6- and 10-inch version and will be available through November and December.

### Learn More

To learn more about bone marrow registration and how you can help, go to [www.bethematch.org](http://www.bethematch.org).