

Donor Found for Joanna

CHICAGO --- A donor match has been identified for Joanna, the young woman requiring a transplant in order to continue her ongoing battle with Hodgkin's Lymphoma. The search began six months ago, while Joanna continued chemotherapy treatments and participated in a clinical trial. The chemo has put her into a temporary state of remission.

"It only takes one," her sister Anastasia told supporters. She shared the following statistics: the National Bone Marrow Registry has 12 million donors. In the drives for Joanna, 56 potential donors were identified from the initial swab. Of those, 20 were further tested. That narrowed the pool to 6 possible donors. Still further testing, which required a match of 10 out of 10 characteristics, netted one suitable match. "Yes, one," her sister reiterated. "What if this person had slept in, skipped the swabbing, or decided it was too uncomfortable? What if...? We have all learned so much from Joanna's situation—and above all—how one person makes a difference." The doctors at MD Anderson in Houston, where the transplant will take place, shared these statistics: the Anglo population match on average is one per every 25,000 donors. For Joanna, it was one out of 12 million. "The power of prayer is real. God's grace is real," Anastasia proclaimed.

Fortunately, the donor has agreed to proceed with the transplant. Joanna will soon travel to Houston, to be prepped for the procedure. It will take place on July 16. Post-transplant, she will remain in the hospital for 30 days, and will require three-to-six months of outpatient care in Houston.

Joanna and her family wish to thank everyone for their efforts and continued prayers as she prepares for the biggest fight of her life. They expressed their hope that people will continue to stay involved with the AHEPA Bone Marrow Registry as well as the National Bone Marrow Donor Program. "Joanna's situation is living proof that every single person counts. Your work will count for someone," her sister added.

The drives for Joanna marked the third annual AHEPA Marrow Team Pappas Donor Drive campaign. More than 65 Greek Orthodox parishes and other organizations throughout the US hosted donor drives and collectively added 2114 new donors to the registry. The AHEPA Bone Marrow Donor Registry continues its efforts to grow the registry with donors of Hellenic heritage so that Greek patients in need of a bone marrow or stem cell transplant may receive a second chance at life. Hellenes continue to be severely underrepresented in the national and international registries.

"Greeks, particularly of the Diaspora, have a tremendous legacy of philanthropy, and the AHEPA Bone Marrow Donor Registry's mission of philanthropy is simple and personal - give of oneself and get tested as a potential bone marrow donor to offer someone the most charitable of all donations: a second chance at life," AHEPA states on their Web site. "Joanna's story is proof-positive that it only takes one person to in effect, save another person's life," Anastasia said.

John Venetos M.D., Chairman of the AHEPA Bone Marrow Registry, wishes to thank all of the AHEPA Marrow Donor staff and all the volunteers who spent countless hours organizing, participating and promoting the cause; plus The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, the Holy Metropolis of Chicago, AHEPA Chapters and members, The Daughters of Penelope, The Greek Ladies Philoptochos Society, the YAL

as well as all the priests and parishioners who supported the combined efforts. "The outpouring of love and commitment coupled with the tremendous volume of individuals who decided to become potential donors allowed us the opportunity to be successful in our national crusade to 'fight the fight' for Joanna, and find her a life saving match. Thanks to all - together we have made a difference," added Dr. Venetos.

Dr. Venetos and Joanna's family kindly request that every Greek join the AHEPA Bone Marrow Donor Registry movement, and become a donor, host a donor drive, or assist with financial support for this critical mission. For more information on how to get involved, call Dr. Venetos 773.989.6262 or visit www.ahepamarrow.org.

The family will continue to provide updates on her progress. The Greek Star extends its prayers to Joanna and her family, for a successful procedure and a speedy recovery.