

## Popular coach needs bone marrow match

By J.T. MORAND  
STAFF WRITER

**F**ormer Deerfield High School basketball coach Steve Pappas has never seen teamwork like that being displayed by Team Pappas.

The growing group of educators, coaches, former players and parents from Lake and Cook counties has assembled to find Pappas a bone marrow donor.

Pappas, 54, is battling non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a cancer that attacks the body's blood-filtering tissues that help fight infection and disease. He was diagnosed in Aug. 2004, two years after retiring from coaching, and has undergone different kinds of chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

A stem cell transplant using stem cells from his own marrow in 2005 didn't work.

"It's been a real battle, but I'm fighting the fight," said Pappas, who still manages to teach English at Deerfield.

### Greek heritage

However, his doctors are hopeful another transplant from someone of Greek heritage will give Pappas, who



Steve Pappas, a teacher at Deerfield High School and former basketball coach, talks to players on the sidelines during a game several years ago. The popular coach is seeking a bone marrow transplant match in his fight against non-Hodgkins lymphoma.

is Greek, the best chance of survival.

"We feel there's a greater chance in the Greek

community," Pappas said.

"We're trying to get a donor quickly so I can get this done in the summer."

At least three blood tests are required to ensure compatibility.

On the court, Pappas' accomplishments include a record of 313 wins and 154 losses over 17 years at Deerfield and Gordon Tech. He's taken his teams to four supersectionals, four supersectional championships, eight regional championships and the state championship.

He will be inducted into the Illinois Basketball Hall of Fame April 29.

Since Pappas is so highly regarded as a coach, the team has begun reaching out to schools in the area.

Pappas laughed, saying he has gone head to head against many of the coaches working on Team Pappas.

"You try to beat each other every Friday or Saturday night, but this stuff endures," he said. "I've got a bunch of friends going to bat for me."

Mike Kolze, former Highland Park High School boys basketball coach, said Team Pappas started with 30 people, but has grown quickly as word gets out. Each team member has told everyone they know and those people

are spreading the news too.

The football coach, he said, is sending letters to his team's parents asking for help.

"It's really starting to mushroom," he said. "The response has been overwhelming."

Betsy Barnett, a library aide at Stevenson High School whose son, Blaine, played for Pappas at Deerfield, wasted no time sending an e-mail to all staff and faculty at the Lincolnshire school.

"People stop me in the halls now and say things like, 'I have three Greek friends!'" she said.

Blaine Barnett said he'll do whatever he can to help the coach who made him a starting point guard, even though he was only 5'7" and the coach knew Blaine would rather play soccer in college.

Blaine, who played just one year for Pappas, said no other coach has had a greater impact on his life. He attributes the strong work ethic and mental stamina Pappas instilled as reasons for making the Northwestern soccer team.

"He gave me a chance," he said. "It's rare to have such a short time with someone who impacted me so deeply. He truly cared about us."

### Faith in action

Kip Gasper, former Deerfield girls and sophomore boys basketball coach, said the chances of finding a match increase with every person they reach.

"The more people who learn of the need, the more who are tested," he said. "The more who are tested, the more likely a match will come, and come soon."

Pappas said his team's efforts are about more than saving his life; they're raising awareness about stem cell research which may be able to help others.

Giving people fighting chances is what Pappas is known for, his friends say.

"If others were in need, Steve would be the first in line to help," said Sue Hebson, assistant superintendent for human resources at School District 113. "So, it is only fitting that so many loving friends, athletes, coaches, colleagues and even strangers are motivated to act on his behalf. We will find a match because ardent faith and purposeful action are powerful in combination."

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## How To HELP

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**S**everal events are being organized by Team Pappas to find a bone marrow donor for Steve Pappas, former Deerfield High School basketball coach and English teacher with non-Hodgkins lymphoma.

Team Pappas encourages everyone to take the blood test. However, doctors feel the best chances for a match are in the Greek community.

Donor drives will be held:

■ April 9 St. Nectarios Greek Orthodox Church, 133 South Rosell Road, Palatine, 9-10 a.m. (Donors must fast for one hour before testing.)  
■ April 9 St. George's Church, 1220 South 60th Court, Cicero, 12-1:30 p.m.  
■ April 15 Notre Dame High School, 7655 West Dempster, Niles, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.  
■ April 16 St. Peter

and Paul Greek Orthodox Church, 1401 Wagner Road, Glenview, 12-1:30 p.m.

■ April 16 St. Demetrius Greek Orthodox Church, 2727 W. Winona, Chicago, 12-1:30 p.m.

■ April 17 Deerfield High School, 1959 Waukegan Road, Deerfield, 1-7 p.m.

■ April 18 Highland Park High School, 433 Vine Avenue, Highland Park, 1-7 p.m.

■ April 29 GMMT Basketball Tournament, St. Patrick's High School, 5900 W. Belmont, Chicago, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.

■ April 30 GMMT Basketball Tournament, St. Patrick's High School, 5900 W. Belmont, Chicago, 1-6 p.m.

■ May 19 St. Demetrius Greek Orthodox Church, 2727 W. Winona, Chicago, 7 p.m. (Fundraiser)