



Bone marrow transplant survivors and life-saving donors meet for first time

Gift of Life Marrow Registry makes emotional introductions during June 2 gala in NYC

NEW YORK CITY (June 3, 2016) – Imagine meeting, for the very first time, the person who saved your life.

That's exactly what transpired last night during Gift of Life Marrow Registry's 16th annual gala at the Grand Hyatt New York. In celebration of its 25th anniversary, Gift of Life honored transplant recipient Wendy Siegel and introduced other transplant recipients to the heroic, life-saving donors whom they'd never met.

Wendy Siegel

In January 2012, Siegel – the wife of Stephen Siegel, chairman of Global Brokerage for CBRE, the world's largest commercial real estate company – was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia. The bone marrow transplant that saved her life came on June 17, 2013, and last night was her very first meeting with her donor.

"We're all on a journey and we decide what we're going to make of it," said Siegel. "I am not a hero for having an illness, an illness doesn't make anyone a hero. A hero is someone who leaves this world somewhat better than the way they found it."

Since she was diagnosed, Siegel and her husband have worked tirelessly in support of bone marrow donation awareness and registration. To date, their efforts have resulted in more than 21,000 sponsored donors, 267 donor/recipient matches, and 31 transplants.

Saving a young life

Donor Jill Greenberg Karten, 25, from **Queens** was introduced to five-year-old recipient Bennett Vulykh, from **Buffalo Grove, Ill.** On May 30 of 2013, two-year-old Vulykh was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia. He didn't require a transplant at first, but in late August of 2014, he had relapsed and a bone marrow transplant became essential. Vulykh's procedure took place on December 10, 2014 at Chicago's Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital. His recovery took about two months and he has been healthy and happy ever since.

"We got lucky," said Vitaliy Vulykh, Bennett's father. "We were blessed. At some point a brave girl decided she would throw her name in the ring willing to give a complete stranger the most amazing gift, a second chance at life."

Hope, after a long battle

Donor Carol Hatch, 60, of **Lunenburg, Mass.** was introduced to her recipient, Andrew Michael, age 56, of **Half Moon Bay, Calif.** Michael, a seismologist, was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Though desperately in need of a peripheral blood stem cell transplant, he wasn't a match with any member of his family.

Luckily, after a search through donor registries, an appropriate donor was found. Two separate transplants were performed on Michael – the first coming in 2014 and the most recent being done just last month.

This year's gala – which featured Broadway, Hollywood, and TV actress Tovah Feldshuh as emcee – recognized the Real Estate Board of New York and the Alpha Epsilon Pi Foundation.

To register as a donor, visit www.giftoflife.org.

About Gift of Life

The Gift of Life Marrow Registry is a non-profit organization committed to curing blood cancer through marrow and stem cell donation. A leader in the field, Gift of Life's vision is to find a match for any patient in need, whenever they may need one.

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