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## **WOMAN WHO SURVIVED RARE IMMUNE DISORDER MEETS HER DONOR AT GIFT OF LIFE MARROW REGISTRY EVENT**

### **Pair Introduced at Celebrating Life Seattle Event Honoring Lifesaving Heroes and Transplant Survivors**

**BOCA RATON, August 1, 2023** – In a joyful reunion, Hayley Luker, a 22-year-old survivor of Inherited Immune Systems Disorders, met her lifesaving bone marrow donor, Daniel Thomas, for the first time. The meeting took place at the [Gift of Life Marrow Registry Celebrating Life Seattle](#) event held in Seattle, Wash. on July 30, highlighting the extraordinary impact of marrow donation in saving lives.

Dena Fantle, an Aplastic Anemia survivor who celebrated her 10<sup>th</sup> transplant anniversary and served as an event committee member, made the introduction of the donor-recipient pair. Also celebrating transplant anniversaries at the event were Gift of Life Marrow Registry Founder and CEO Jay Feinberg (28<sup>th</sup>) and Joe Grojean (12<sup>th</sup>), a survivor of Myelodysplastic Disorder.

Luker was in the fourth grade when she was diagnosed with DOCK8 immunodeficiency syndrome, a disorder that causes lower-than-normal numbers of immune cells and an increased risk for some types of cancers. Doctors suggested a cure was possible through a bone marrow transplant and while her family was upset because none of them proved to be a match for her, they were ecstatic when a donor was found in Gift of Life's registry. Her transplant took place at the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center in Bethesda, Md.

"I felt very grateful that someone that I've never met, would be willing to do that for me," said Luker. "He took time out of his life to stop and do a selfless act that gave me another chance at life. I will be forever grateful to him."

Fortunately for Luker, Thomas, 27, a resident of Puyallup, Wash., had joined Gift of Life's registry at a donor recruitment event hosted by his fraternity, Lambda Chi Alpha at Washington State University in 2015.

Recalling the moment that he learned he was a potential match for a patient in need, Thomas said, "It was a combo of disbelief and excitement. I know matching can be tough and I wasn't sure if I'd ever really be called upon. Then when I was contacted, I was thrilled at the possibility of making such a great impact. I even called my parents right away to share the news."

After the required wait time of at least one year that is obligated by medical anonymity laws, the two were excited to meet as they now share an unbreakable bond. With friends and family looking on, they embraced for the first time in a moment that transcended words, but left those present with an overwhelming sense of inspiration.

"Not that I didn't before, but [this transplant] has really made me appreciate life and it has helped me realize just how precious life is and how we need to be thankful and appreciate every day that we have," said Luker. "I am also thankful for Gift of Life. I think what they are doing for people like me is a wonderful thing."

Gift of Life's Celebrating Life party is aimed at honoring transplant survivors, donors, recipients, volunteers and the many people who support the organization's mission. Hosting this celebration in Seattle is of particular significance as Feinberg underwent a lifesaving bone marrow transplant at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, Wash., in 1995.

"For 30 years Gift of Life has had one mission – to ensure that every patient has a donor available at the time they are needed," said Feinberg. "Every person fighting to overcome blood cancer deserves a second chance at life. Our donors tell us that saving a cancer patient's life is one of the most incredible, life-changing experiences possible."

### **About Gift of Life Marrow Registry**

Gift of Life Marrow Registry is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization headquartered in Boca Raton, Fla. The organization, established in 1991, is dedicated to saving lives by facilitating blood stem cell and bone marrow transplants for patients with leukemia, lymphoma, and other blood-related diseases. The registry houses its own state-of-the-art stem cell collection center, biobank, and laboratory. To learn more about Gift of Life Marrow Registry, visit [www.giftoflife.org](http://www.giftoflife.org)

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