



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

**Media contact:** Edwige Buteau

Phone: (917) 655-3843; Email: [Edwige.Buteau@outlook.com](mailto:Edwige.Buteau@outlook.com)

### **POLICE OFFICER WHO SURVIVED LEUKEMIA MEETS GRAD STUDENT WHO SAVED HIS LIFE**

*Heartwarming meeting took place at pickleball tournament hosted by Gift of Life Marrow Registry and Miami Beach Police Department*

**MIAMI, FL (APRIL 17, 2024)** - Kenneth Williams, a 34-year-old police officer who survived leukemia, recently met the stranger whose stem cell donation saved his life. The heartwarming reunion took place at a charitable pickleball tournament hosted by [Gift of Life Marrow Registry](#) and the Miami Beach Police Department (MBPD) on April 11 in Miami Beach, Fla. The event, which was part of a broader partnership between Gift of Life and the MBPD, brought together community supporters to raise money for blood cancer patients and survivors.

Officer Williams, a nine-year veteran of the force who lives in Chubbuck, Idaho with his wife and two young children initially attributed his cancer symptoms to his physically demanding career as a police officer. However, in March 2022, medical tests revealed a much more dire diagnosis of Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. Facing a grueling battle against the disease, Officer Williams and his doctors immediately began the search for a donor.

“The staff at Huntsman Cancer Institute did a good job keeping me encouraged throughout the process,” said Williams. “They told me I had several donors that were all good matches, but after the first few backed out of the transplant it started getting a little discouraging.”

Fortunately for Williams, a match was eventually found in the Gift of Life Marrow Registry and the donor, Banks Lomel, stepped up wholeheartedly. Williams underwent a successful transplant as his coworkers rallied around him, hosting a fundraiser to help cover his medical costs. He recounted his gratitude for his community - and, for Lomel.

“I am grateful for Banks and feel so blessed that I was able to get matched with him,” said Williams.

Lomel, a 22-year-old graduate student at the University of Florida, swabbed his cheek to join the Gift of Life registry in 2020 when members of his lacrosse team held a drive in the hopes of finding a match for a fellow lacrosse player. He was motivated, in part, by his over 1,000 hours of volunteer work at the Children’s Cancer Center in Tampa, Fla. He knew many families who had been affected by cancer, and wanted to do all he could to help.

“I feel like it wasn’t something I really had to sacrifice or work for,” said Lomel. “I am just very grateful that I’ve had the opportunity to help someone.”

Due to U.S. medical privacy laws, donors and recipients have to wait at least one year before learning the identity of their matches. Following the pair’s meeting, event attendees enjoyed a cocktail reception and live auction featuring art from noted photographer and City of Miami Beach Assistant Chief of Police David De La Espriella.

All proceeds will benefit Gift of Life Marrow Registry, helping to increase the number of potential donors and give patients battling diseases like leukemia, lymphoma, and sickle cell anemia a second chance at life.

Photos and video of the event are available upon request.

### **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).