

# Donor gets to marrow of giving

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Maryann Peddicord almost forgot that she'd signed up for the National Bone Marrow Registry two years ago – until she was called in as a possible match.

"I was kinda shocked," said Peddicord, 50, when the registry gave her a call this February. "More blood work and tests were done. My marrow coordinator was wonderful. She walked me through it. I also got an information packet and a DVD to get familiar with the whole process."

According to the National Bone Marrow Donor Program, volunteer donors should be between the ages of 18 and 61 and meet the health guidelines. To be listed on the registry, personal information forms and a cheek swab are submitted. Sometimes, a small blood sample will be drawn.

Donors provide stem cells and bone marrow for patients afflicted with auto-immune diseases such as acute myeloid leukemia (AML) or cancer of the white blood cells, lymphoma, sickle-cell anemia – and have no family bone-marrow matches.

And so on Feb. 28, Peddicord, assisted by the National Bone Marrow Donor Program coordinator and her husband, checked into the Alta Bates Hospital in Oakland to give her bone marrow to an anonymous recipient – an 8-year-old boy suffering from AML. All Peddicord knows is his age and that he's from another state. He's also in remission, which is the best time for a bone marrow transplant.

With Peddicord under general anesthesia, doctors drew out marrow from both sides of her hip bones. Her husband drove her home that night. For her recovery, she took some pain pills and iced her hips. She rested over the weekend and was back to work on Monday, March 3.

"What I went through is nothing compared to what the little guy is going through," said Peddicord. "He went through a round of radiation to prepare for the transplant. The radiation is so invasive, the recipient was near death. The doctors said they had 'to (almost) kill him to save him.'"

Peddicord, the Faith Formation secretary at St. Ignatius Church, said she got involved in the bone marrow drive in honor of her grandfather, whom she lost to leukemia.

"I know what it is like to lose a loved one to cancer," she said. "(Donating marrow) has been very humbling. I did this not for me but for the little boy. He is just beginning his life. And though (St. Ignatius Parochial Administrator) Father Robert has blessed me and gave me strength, all prayers should now be directed toward the little boy."