

## Donation saves Ontario teen's life

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By IAN FAIRCLOUGH Valley Bureau

GREENWOOD — After 14 years on a bone marrow donor list, Cpl. Tammy Kline of 14 Wing Greenwood was finally matched with a recipient last year, an Ontario teenager with leukemia who says the donation saved his life.

"It was getting to the point where I was going to die if I didn't get one," David Rines said in a phone interview from Ontario.

The procedure actually happened in March 2006, but Mr. Rines and Cpl. Kline, a supply technician, were not allowed to know the identity of the other until a year later because the first year is when any rejection will likely happen and Canadian Blood Services wants to avoid creating emotional attachments in case the donation doesn't take. After the marrow was extracted from Cpl. Kline in Halifax, it was flown to Ontario and given to Mr. Rines the same day, which happened to be his 18th birthday.

"This was an unbelievable gift," said Mr. Rines, who was diagnosed with leukemia in October 2003.

He is still recovering and being treated, but is overwhelmingly grateful for what Cpl. Kline did. When they met in Ontario two weeks ago, "all I could get out was 'Thank you very much,' but it's nowhere near enough," he said. "It was amazing to meet her, to see the person whose blood runs through my veins, to meet and embrace the women who saved me."

The two had talked for a couple of months on the phone and e-mail after a year of letters, which were censored by the blood agency to make sure neither could have any idea of who the other was, where they were from or even their gender.

At times, that meant that even the most minor details could be taken out the letters. In an early one, for example, Cpl. Kline's line that "I need to get my beauty sleep" was whited out.

Instead, they talked about hobbies, favourite TV shows and movies. But Mr. Rines's comments about family, playing bass guitar and camping tipped off Cpl. Kline that he was probably a teenage boy. He knew she was a woman from the XX denoting female chromosomes on the IV bag hooked up to him for the donation. Her comments about TV shows and movies made him figure that she was in North America.

The bone marrow registry is international, so donors could come from anywhere.

But because matches depend on someone's ancestry, possible matches are limited.

Cpl. Kline has been donating blood every eight weeks for years and that's why she was first approached about joining the bone marrow registry in the early 1990s.

When she was called in December 2005 and asked if she still wanted to donate because there was a match for her bone marrow, she didn't hesitate.

The procedure to extract the bone marrow left her uncomfortable for a few days, she said, but she was fine after that and ran a half-marathon three weeks later.

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