

Teacher saves a boys life; Evelyn Frankle donates bone marrow

By: Eric Gross, Staff Reporter
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BREWSTER-The holidays are a time for giving and what better way to help mankind than to give the gift of life!

Evelyn Frankle, a special education substitute teacher at the Garden Street School in Brewster, recently donated bone marrow that saved the life of an eight-year-old boy-a total stranger who had registered through the National Marrow Donor Program.

Frankle, a Brewster resident whose daughter Kaitlyn graduated from both Garden Street School and Brewster High School and is now a junior in college, recalled how a decade ago a local child developed leukemia and the "Brewster community rallied behind the young lady and conducted a bone marrow drive at St. Lawrence O'Toole School. I joined the registry as did so many of my friends and neighbors and hadn't heard a thing for years. All of a sudden late last summer I received a call advising that my bone marrow had been a perfect match."

Evelyn was asked to undergo additional testing. She visited a lab and gave more blood. "Several weeks passed and one afternoon the phone rang. I was informed that my marrow was a six antigen match for a little boy suffering from non-Hodgkins' Lymphoma. I was asked to donate my bone marrow and without hesitation, I agreed," she said.

Frankle underwent a minor surgical procedure under anesthesia. Two incisions were made in her back with a hollow needle and the bone marrow was extracted. "The operation was painless and the incision was a little sore for a few days afterwards but the donor program paid for my transportation to and from the hospital as well as all medical costs associated with the procedure. They even paid for my sister's expenses who acted as my companion," she said.

Evelyn called the donation a "wonderful experience. It was so meaningful since the little boy who I helped is the same age as the children attending Garden Street."

Has Evelyn met her bone marrow recipient? Frankle explained that donations are made anonymously. "I don't know if I will ever get to meet him. There is a possibility that after a year I might have that opportunity but I am hoping a year from now to at least know how he is doing," she said.

National Marrow Donor Program officials estimate that a marrow or blood cell transplant could benefit more than 35,000 children and adults with life-threatening diseases each year.

Frankle said only 30-percent of patients in need of a marrow or blood cell transplant find a matched donor in their immediate family.

The National Marrow Donor Program offers information on line at www.marrow.com.

Frankle met with Brewster Superintendent Dr. Jane Sandbank on Monday along with the

assistant principal of the Garden Street School Nancy Herbert.

Sandbank called the holidays a "special time. What better way for an educator-a woman who loves children-than to donate the gift of life. Evelyn has created connections. In Brewster, people are extraordinary because like Evelyn Frankle, they believe in giving."

Herbert agreed. "We are honored to have Evelyn as a part of the Garden Street family. It gives us chills thinking of her wonderful gift," she said.

Frankle complimented the entire Brewster community: "Everyone has been 100-percent supportive. Brewster is an exemplary place where people really care and want to help each other."

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