

## Registry brings help to leukemia patient

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BELMONT - A positive match, discovered through the Save Giovanni movement, offers hope that the life of a 13-year-old boy suffering from acute leukemia may be saved.

Giovanni's father, Michael Guglielmo, who helped launch a movement aimed at adding people to the National Bone Marrow Donor Registry, reported that a positive match for the boy was confirmed Wednesday, coming out of one of the movement's many donor drives in New Hampshire.

With the match, the youth, whose identity and hometown are being kept confidential, will finally be able to get the potentially life-saving bone marrow transplant that she desperately needs.

"Giovanni is going to be responsible for saving his first life before his first birthday. That's hope; you cannot quantify that," said Guglielmo.

Only a few months ago, Guglielmo's son, Giovanni, found a marrow match from a cord blood registry and received the transplant he needed to battle the extremely rare immune deficiency disease that hospitalized the infant.

As a result of his transplant, Giovanni will now be able to make it to his first birthday on July 24, and Guglielmo hopes that the teen who will now receive a transplant will see his next birthday as a result of the donor effort.

Finding a donor match stemming from a Giovanni Movement-organized drive in Dover is something that makes the tireless efforts of the movement all seem worth it, said Guglielmo.

"When you are going through this, you are in a continual cycle of horror, anger, and relief," said Guglielmo of the ordeal he and Giovanni's mother had gone through. "When a donor finally comes, it is complete relief."

Guglielmo was quick to point out that the rollercoaster ride that is the health of a child does not end there. To prepare Giovanni or the 13-year-old boy for accepting a transplant, their small bodies must be purged of their own blood cells, which is done through an 11-step chemotherapy treatment.

"It's awful to watch your child be in such pain," said Guglielmo.

After their own blood cells have been killed, leaving no immune system left, the new bone marrow is infused and begins generating new, healthy blood cells.

Katharina Harf, executive vice-president of DKMS Americas, the company that sponsors almost all of the national registry donor drives in the United States, said the process can be long and does not always guarantee that the patient will not die, anyway.

"It's awesome that the movement still goes on even after [Giovanni] found a donor. To be honest, it's amazing what this family has done," said Harf.

To date, the Giovanni Movement is responsible for the addition of 8,890 potential donors to the national registry since January of this year. At DKMS alone, Guglielmo has been able to add more than 1,000 donors through his son's movement.

As a result, 254 possible matches have been identified. Statistically, only one out of every 20,000 potential donors is a match for bone marrow transplants.

The youth that has been matched to a New Hampshire man participating in the Dover drive will be receiving his transplant in New York on Aug. 16.

"He's just a really good guy," said Harf of the donor, Tim Dillow of Freemont. "For him, it's not even a question of not doing this."

Harf explained that the National Bone Marrow Registry has a policy to keep track of donors and patients for the first year after the transplant takes place.

While Dillow said he would find it kind of neat to meet the boy he is donating to down the line, he just takes comfort in the fact that he is giving someone else a fighting chance.

"If this was my kid, we would want someone to step up to the plate," said Dillow, who has a son and daughter himself.

Guglielmo said he plans to push forward with the movement that is his son's namesake, holding more drives and continuing to bring national attention to the issue.

Harf said DKMS Americas will be right there, aiding Guglielmo and the Giovanni movement.

"We will do basically any drive he throws at us," said Harf.

DKMS is a nonprofit German organization with the sole purpose of adding donors to the International and National Donor Registry. The company was founded by Harf's father after her mother died from acute leukemia. Harf explained that, at the time, Germany had only 3,000 in its registry and now, thanks to DKMS, the country has a registry of more than 3 million.

Two other partial matches resulting from Giovanni-inspired drives are pending test results to determine whether a transplant would be viable.

For more information about the Giovanni Movement, visit the website at [www.savegiovanni.org](http://www.savegiovanni.org).

To find out more about DKMS Americas, become a donor, or help organize a drive, contact the organization by phone at 1-866-340-3567 or visit the website [www.dkmsamericas.org](http://www.dkmsamericas.org).