

Searching for a miracle

Silver Lakes woman needs a bone marrow match

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It's not every day you get to be somebody's miracle.

Today's your chance.

Shirley Hibbetts is hoping you are the miracle needed to save the life of her daughter.

Dena Hibbetts-Gerardi, who was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma, needs a bone marrow transplant from a matching donor.

Diagnosed in 2005 with the disease, has endured multiple rounds of chemotherapy and last summer received a stem-cell transplant of her own cells, which failed.

The cancer has returned and now the 45-year-old Silver Lakes resident is in urgent need of a matching marrow donor.

She also needs blood donations for her treatment.

Because miracles sometimes need a helping hand, there is a blood drive and marrow screening for Dena from 2 to 7 p.m. today at Barstow Community Hospital.

"We're desperately searching for that one person to be the miracle Dena needs to save her life," Hibbetts says.

Unfortunately, neither of Dena's brothers' marrow was a match.

"Since she was diagnosed, she's fought the difficult battle with many rounds of chemotherapy and other cancer-fighting drugs," says .

"Dena was in remission for a while, but in April, the tumors came back and

the doctor said the only thing that would help is a bone marrow transplant."

and her husband, Art, who also live in Silver Lakes, are hoping the community will respond to their desperate plea to help their daughter.

"Barstow has been called the 'city with a heart' and now, hopefully, it will be a city with marrow," Shirley says.

and her husband, Mark Gerardi, are longtime Barstow residents. , the parks maintenance supervisor for the city of Barstow, has great faith and has been praying the most, according to Shirley .

is the mother of Erik, 27, and Shannon, 20.

Erik was serving in Afghanistan but has been home on "compassionate reassignment." He is now processing out of the army.

Because was born in Barstow and the family is known there, Shirley believes people will respond.

"If Barstow is too far away, or people don't have time, we want them to know they can go to any local donor center of the Blood Bank of San Bernardino and Riverside counties and see if they are a match," Shirley says.

"After people give blood, they can get a swab of the inside of their mouth and say it's for bone marrow transplant. The data goes into the National Marrow Donor Program Registry," she says.

The community has already been generous.

Northrop Grumman is donating money to help offset some of the costs of testing, Shirley says.

A handmade king-size quilt has been donated and will be given to one lucky donor.

"There are people dying, waiting for blood or a bone marrow transplant," according to Shirley .

"If people would donate blood and join the National Marrow Donor Program Registry to help patients like Dena, they would be helping so many who are counting on them to make the lifesaving difference."

To be a donor is more involved, but certainly a small price to pay to save someone's life, she says.

"No matter what happens with my family, for the rest of my life I will be dedicated to letting people know how important it is to give the gift of life," Shirley says.

"This is truly a matter of life and death."