

Unknown donor saves woman's life

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SAINT CLAIR - At a time in her life when she had so much to live for, Edna "Eddie Lou" Blankenhorn was dying from a rare form of leukemia.

Last November, the 53-year-old Saint Clair woman found out she was gravely ill and that she needed a bone marrow transplant to save her life.

A woman who has given so much to others in her life - as a dedicated nurse for 31 years at Pottsville Hospital, a loving wife, mother and grandmother to five, and a devoted daughter who moved next door to her elderly aunt and mother to be there for them when they needed her - Eddie Lou found that she desperately needed to depend on the compassion and charity of others.

The search seemed grim after several members of her family were tested to see if their bone marrow was a match for a transplant. No family members matched.

"I was surprised to find out that only 25 percent of the time, the donor is a family member," Eddie Lou said.

She became registered on the National Marrow Donor Program registry and waited anxiously while the disease progressed. She prayed and hoped for a miracle.

And one day, an unknown 42-year-old woman, a perfect stranger but a perfect match for Eddie Lou, saved her life by donating her own bone marrow to someone she had never met. The transplant operation took place in February.

In about a year, if both parties agree, the marrow donor registry program will connect the donor and recipient, and Eddie Lou may get to chance to thank the woman who saved her life.

"I don't even know her name, but she gave me a second chance at life," she said. "How do you find the words to thank someone for saving your life? It's overwhelming.