

Chippewa Valley Schools hosts bone marrow registration drive



Kelly Gianotti, a teacher at Ottawa Elementary School in Clinton Township, donated stem cells in 2013 to help save the life of a blood cancer patient. Photo courtesy of CHIPPEWA VALLEY SCHOOLS, DKMS

By Nicole Tuttle , For The Macomb Daily
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MaryAnn Hastings received a peripheral blood stem cell transplant from Kelly Gianotti. The two were able to meet about three years later in Hastings' hometown near Boston, Mass. Photo courtesy of KELLY GIANOTTI

As a third grade teacher at Ottawa Elementary School, Kelly Gianotti teaches students many important life lessons along with reading and math.

The most important lesson she has instructed was taught by example: how to save the life of a blood cancer patient.

Gianotti donated her stem cells in 2013 to help save the life of a blood cancer patient. The patient was in need of a bone marrow stem cell transplant and had no donor match in her family.

“I had seen a flier at a local gym for a high school student who was looking for a match. That intrigued me. I went online to register,” Gianotti said.

A year later Gianotti learned she was a potential match, but not for the high school patient. She went through more testing and did the outpatient donation procedure.

Gianotti later found out her donation assisted MaryAnn Hastings, who lived near Boston, Mass. The two chatted via e-mail and were able to meet in 2016, when Gianotti traveled to Boston.

“The lady I donated for died last February of a different type of cancer. I wanted to honor her and spread the word,” Gianotti said, adding that Hastings’ family indicated she was able to give Hastings three extra years of life with her donation.

The donation experience motivated Gianotti to host the first DKMS bone marrow registration drive through Chippewa Valley Schools district. DKMS is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to the fight against blood cancer and blood disorders, according to its website.

The goal of the drive is to help register potential donors. It will be held Tuesday from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Cheyenne Elementary School in Macomb Township. Gianotti said she hopes to register between 100 and 200 potential donors.

Requirements to join the bone marrow registry are that the donor be in good health and between the ages of 18 and 55. The process involves filling out a form, understanding the donation methods and swabbing the inside of each cheek for 30 seconds with a cotton swab. Donors swab their cheeks in a circular motion.

There is no cost to register, although donations are accepted. The donations assist DKMS in covering the \$65 registration processing fee.

According to DKMS, 70 percent of people suffering from blood-related illnesses rely on donors other than their families.

If selected as a match for a patient, there are two different methods of donation, according to the DKMS website.

According to the DKMS website, a donation method used in about 25 percent of cases is a one or two hour surgical procedure performed under anesthesia to collect marrow cells from the back of the pelvic bone using a syringe.

To obtain more information about the drive or to make a monetary donation, visit fb.com/cvsgetsswabbed. Those who want to join the bone marrow registry but are unable to attend the June 6 drive can register at dkms.org.