



Ginger Marion, of the American Red Cross, hopes to encourage more minorities to become bone marrow donors.

Black bone marrow donors needed

By YVETTE N. FREEMAN
Chronicle Staff Writer

The National Bone Marrow Donor Program plans to team up with two area churches to recruit more bone marrow donors, especially from the African-American sector of the community, for the National Bone Marrow Registry.

Two donor drives will be held this month — Nov. 17 at Mount Tabor United Methodist Church, here in Winston-Salem, and Nov. 24 at Saint James United Methodist Church in Rural Hall. Both drives will be held from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The purpose of the drives will not only be to educate the public about the need for bone marrow donors, but also to recruit more donors for the National Registry, especially from the minority communities.

Each year approximately 20,000 people in the United States develop or are born with illnesses that require bone marrow transplants. African-Americans make up about one-fourth of those patients. And of the 20,000 total, only 30% of the people in need of transplants, black or white, will be able to find donors within their own families. The remaining 70% must be matched with donors outside of their families.

Those figures are not very encouraging, especially for minority patients, since 92% of the National Marrow Donor Program volunteer donors are Caucasian. Ginger Marion of the American Red Cross explains why minority donors are in critical need.

"Because of typing — there's only eight blood types and if you and I are both O positive, we can donate blood to one another. But the anagins typing that we look for, for the Marrow Registry — these

anagins are determined by our parents. We receive two from each parent at the time of conception. And because they receive the anagins from their parents, and their parents, and it goes on back through the generations, it would be very, very unlikely, in fact, almost an impossibility for an African-American or a Caucasian person or a Caucasian and a native American Indian, or for any racial or ethnic group to be able to donate to another one," she stated.

Marion also said that of the 425,000 people on the national registry, only 15,000 are of any minority group, which means that if the anagins of those 15,000 donors do not match that of needy minority patients, those patients have virtually no hope of receiving a transplant unless a minority donor is found in time. Marion speculated that the reason there are so few minority donors may be because of cultural traditions and beliefs. She explained that in the Asian culture, there are many who believe that whatever a person is born with, that person should also die with.

"Maybe the word hasn't gotten out in the minority community," said Marion. "It just so happens that maybe a lot of us that work with this program do not belong to a minority group. Only a quarter of the population is minority. So naturally, that's less people. And so maybe that has something to do with it. That's why we were excited that St. James wanted to get involved, because they're predominantly an African-American congregation."

Another reason for the lack of minority donors, Marion continued, may be because many blacks feel that the illnesses that cause the need for bone marrow transplants are only common in the Caucasian

community, which is not the case.

Each year, about 9,000 people die from illnesses such as Leukemia, Aplastic Anemia, and other blood diseases, which are all equal opportunity diseases.

According to Marion, that's one person who dies every hour that could have survived had he or she received a bone marrow transplant in time.

Bone marrow is removed from a donor, between the ages of 18 and 55, under general or spinal anesthesia. The procedure usually takes about 45 minutes, during which time, approximately three to five percent of the donor's marrow is removed. The body naturally replaces the marrow within two to three weeks. There is some discomfort and tenderness that may last a couple of days following the procedure.

As with any surgical procedure, there are some risks, however, with the bone marrow removal, the only risk is primarily associated with the anesthesia, and that risk is very low. In fact, in the history of the procedure, no donors have suffered any long-term effects, and there have been no fatalities.

The National Marrow Donor Program is a non-profit organization that was established in 1987 as a collaborative effort of the American Association of Blood Banks, the American Red Cross and the Council of Community Blood Center. It maintains a computerized data bank of available tissue-typed marrow donors nationwide, and enables the sharing and searching of information to unite possible donors with patients in need of marrow transplants. For more information about becoming a bone marrow donor, contact Ginger Marion at the American Red Cross, 650 Coliseum Drive, at 725-4346 Ext. 446.

Upward Bound receives local funding

The Winston-Salem State University Upward Bound Program is the recipient of \$13,000 from the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School system and \$9,000 from R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. to expand its current student enrollment from sixty (60) program enrollees to eighty-five (85) program enrollees during the 1991-92 school year. The additional twenty-five (25) program enrollees were among the one-hundred and ten (110) students who were on the "waiting list." The sixty

(60) program enrollees are funded by the U.S. Dept. of Education, Washington, D.C. This local financial assistance will allow the twenty-five (25) "new" enrollees to receive similar services currently being provided for the sixty (60) program enrollees which include weekly after school tutorial assistance in Communication Skills (English and reading) and mathematics in addition to weekly career counseling seminars.

Project Upward Bound is a pre-college program designed for stu-

dents who have the potential for success in post secondary education by providing them with the skills and motivation necessary for acceptance into a post-secondary institution.

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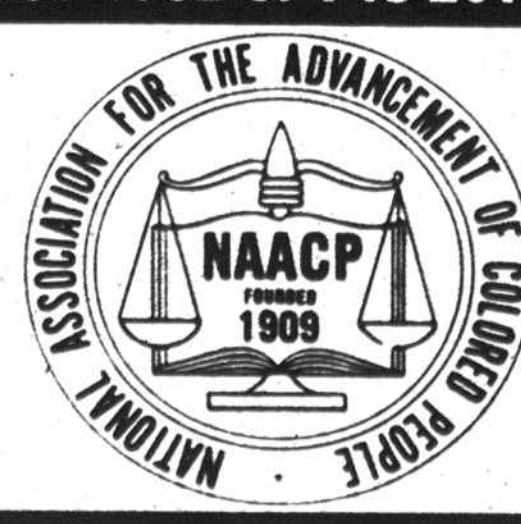
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