

A request on Dr. Martin Luther King Day

Written by Jennifer Jones Austin
Wednesday, 13 January 2010 18:03



Hello, my name is Jennifer Jones Austin. I am a 41 year old mother of two young children. On September 23 of this year, I was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia. Just days before I was walking around feeling fine, taking care of my family, going to the gym daily, and working professionally as an advocate for children and families living in poverty. I had no medical history of health problems. Things were good.

Today I live with the very real possibility that I may not see my children grow up. My doctors have informed me that my chances of surviving Acute Myeloid Leukemia are small unless I undergo a bone marrow transplant that would cure me of this cancer. And now my family, friends, colleagues and I are feverishly searching for a bone marrow donor who will help me have a transplant and significantly decrease the odds of the cancer returning. As we search, we also are hoping to help others like me who need transplants too.

Due to dna, there is a greater likelihood that a fellow African American would be the most compatible donor for me. Unfortunately, however, African Americans are grossly underrepresented in the national and international bone marrow donor registries. For this reason, we are holding national drives across the country on Dr. Martin Luther King Day -- January 18th ___ and online to both raise awareness about the need for African Americans to volunteer to help save another's life by being bone marrow registrants, and to actually increase the representation of African Americans in the registries.

There are thousands of African Americans who suffer with Leukemia who can be helped by fellow African Americans. If we come together as a community and support our fellow African Americans -- some we know and some we don't know -- by just stepping forward, joining the "Be The Match Registry", and being tested to determine whether we can help another by donating marrow through a medical procedure similar to a blood donation, together we can save hundreds of lives. Together we can hold each other up.

What I am asking my African American brothers and sisters to do is to engage and be a part of this very important effort -- not just for me, but for other African Americans. One never knows

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what his or her destiny will be or what will happen in his or her life. Today it's me, this African American woman, but tomorrow it could be some other African American's brother, sister, daughter, son, mother or the person him or herself whose in need of a bone marrow transplant. What we do today can affect the lives of so many people today, tomorrow and in the years to come. If we just get involved and register, get tested and make ourselves available to someone else in great need of a bone marrow transplant, we as African Americans can save the lives of many other African Americans.

Here are four important facts I want you to know:

1. The only thing required to determine if you are a match for me or others is the simple swabbing of your cheek.
2. Due to advances in medicine, donating bone marrow is as simple as giving blood. The majority of the time there is no need for a surgical procedure to extract bone marrow.
3. Potential donors can either attend a drive or click the link below to go online and have a kit sent to them, swab their own cheek and send it in for processing. (Everything is completely free)
4. Finally and most importantly – Prayer Changes Things! Please keep my family and I as well as others in your prayers. Thanks in advance for your prayers, support and efforts to save my life as well as others.

To learn how you may be able to help Jen as well as others in securing a life saving match go to: www.savejen.com .