



ILLINOIS TRANSPLANT RECIPIENT TO MEET LOCAL STEM CELL DONOR

(St. Petersburg, FL: 2/25/10) On Friday, March 12, 2010 Samantha Galauskas, a three year old girl from Illinois, will meet for the first time her stem cell donor, Shaila Lopez from Valrico, who gave her a second chance to live! This once in a lifetime event will be held at 10:30 am at Florida Blood Services(FBS) Headquarters located at 10100 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. St. North in St. Petersburg, just north of Gandy Blvd. The public is invited to attend this joyous occasion.

At 14 months old, Samantha was diagnosed with Chediak-Higashi Syndrome and received her first stem cell transplant from her donor Shaila, who was a non related genetic match. Then two days prior to her 2nd birthday Samantha was diagnosed with Aplastic Anemia. On her birthday, she became so ill with a serious infection that she received a second infusion of stem cells from Shaila that had been preserved. Once the infection passed, Samantha was given the remaining extra stem cells. Luckily they engrafted before Shaila gave a second stem cell donation which she was being prepared to do. Samantha's mother Jacki has since remarked, "Shaila saved her life three times and was willing to do it again. Shaila truly is our hero!"

Before, during and after each of these three stem cell infusions Samantha received numerous transfusions of red blood cells and platelets donated by local Illinois donors. Samantha is now healthy and will be celebrating her 4th birthday with a cake a few weeks early during this special celebration!

Shaila Lopez enrolled in the National Marrow Donor Registry in April of 2003 and became the stem cell donor for Samantha's transplant in December of 2007. Shaila is also the mother of a 4 year old girl and works for K-Force in Ybor City.

For many of the 30,000 patients who will be diagnosed with leukemia, aplastic anemia and 60 other fatal diseases this year, the only chance for survival is a Marrow or Peripheral Blood Stem Cell (PBSC) transplant from a compatible donor. FBS facilitates

more than 200 such transplants each year as the Southwest Florida Outreach Center for the National Marrow Donor Program.

If you are between the ages of 18 and 60, in good health and no more than 25% over your ideal body weight, you can join the more than 46,000 Tampa Bay area volunteers who have already joined the "Be The Match" registry. Simple swabs from inside the mouth to collect DNA samples for tissue typing is all that is required along with registration paperwork. Currently, FBS has funding to cover the laboratory typing fees. Prospective enrollees can visit any FBS Donor Center or bloodmobile to sign up. For further information about the "Be The Match" program call 727-568-2110.

Headquartered in St. Petersburg Florida, FBS provides over 350,000 blood donations to patients at 92 hospitals and other ambulatory healthcare facilities throughout 42 Florida, Georgia, and Alabama counties, through the participation of volunteer donors.

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