

Local donor drive to be held for Blue Bell woman

The marrow donor drive is being held in the honor of Jillian Siegel, a college student suffering from leukemia

By Terri Alderfer
Staff Writer

The women of From the Heart are preparing to host a bone marrow donor drive in honor of Jillian Siegel, a leukemia patient from Blue Bell searching for a donor match.

The women are working with the National Marrow Donor Program of Philadelphia two weekends in a row to help find donor matches for patients suffering from conditions such as leukemia and lymphoma.

A drive will be held Sunday, Nov. 23, at the Conference Center at Green Valley Country Club in Lafayette Hill from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and another will be held Saturday, Nov. 29, at the Ambler Area YMCA in Ambler from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Chair of "Jill's Journey for the Gift of Life" Jill Goldwater said that prospective

donors must be between the ages of 18 and 60 and in good health. Testing involves a swab from the inside of the cheeks to collect a sample of DNA. The donor's tissue type is then entered into the Bone Marrow Registry and made available to patients worldwide in need of transplants. If identified as a match, the potential donor will be contacted by mail or phone and the next step involves collecting a blood sample, which will be evaluated by the patient's transplant center. The materials necessary for the tests will be provided by Pediatric Dental Associates of Fort Washington, Southampton and Northeast Philadelphia.

Goldwater cautions potential donors to consider the full commitment of being tested, to avoid giving false hope to a patient whose life depends on a transplant.

From the Heart consistently chooses causes to support that are close to its members' hearts. Goldwater said that when Jillian's mother, Nancy, told the

group that her daughter had been diagnosed with leukemia and would eventually need a transplant, it immediately began organizing.

"Our group made the decision to have bone marrow drives to see if we could find a match for her," she said.

Nancy and her husband, Phil, want supporters to know that the chances of their DNA being a match for Jillian are slim, but they are urging people to join the registry to enlarge the donor pool.

Jillian is a 20-year-old Penn State student undergoing chemotherapy in preparation for a transplant, although she has not yet found a match.

From the Heart was started in De-

cember 1987 when 25 women from the Ambler area got together to dedicate their time to sponsoring projects and raising funds to benefit causes that were important to them. According to Goldwater, over the past 20 years, the group has raised over \$1 million to support charities such as the Special Olympic Committee, Ronald McDonald House, Make-a-Wish Foundation, Girl Scouts of America, Kelly Anne Dolan Memorial Fund, Ambler Rest Center and St. Christopher's Hospital Emergency Fund.

For those who cannot attend the drives or are unable



Jillian Siegel, in whose honor the marrow drive is being held.

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to donate marrow, Goldwater suggests making a donation to help fund the kits necessary for the tests. Checks can be made out to From the Heart, P.O. Box 583, Ambler, PA 19002.

Although Goldwater does not

know how many possible donors to expect over the next few weeks, she is hopeful that the number will be high.

"We are hoping to be overwhelmed with potential donors," she said.

For more information about marrow donation visit www.marrow.org.