

spring 2005

lifelines

the Blood Centers of the Pacific Newsletter



**Blood Centers
of the Pacific**

a member of the Blood Systems Family



*Blood and bone marrow recipient
William Schweinfurth*

My Story

by *William Schweinfurth*

Many people are alive today as a direct result of the generosity of donors who took the time, and made the effort to give their own precious blood so that others might live. I am one of those “others,” who depended on this for my very life.

In 2002 at the age of 32, I was diagnosed with a blood disorder called Myelodysplasia Syndrome (MDS). I became prone to bruising and bleeding, due to my blood's lack of platelets, and I was often anemic and fatigued, due to the lack of red blood cells. The severe anemia made breathing difficult and even small tasks became exhausting. MDS can progress to full-blown leukemia if the course of the disease is uninterrupted.

My life had become one of needing weekly platelet transfusions, and red blood cell transfusions about every two weeks, as my bone marrow was not producing normal healthy blood cells. It became clear I needed a bone marrow transplant.

Looking back at my notes, I realized that I needed more than 60 platelet transfusions, and at least 36 units of red blood cells during the search for a marrow donor. That's a lot of blood, but many patients need even more than this.

On December 13th, 2002, I had my bone marrow transplant and was given a chance at a new life. There were many difficult days, and even after two years, some days are still harder than others. But I got through the tough times with the love and support of my family and friends, and the excellent caregivers at the University of California at San Francisco and California Pacific Medical Center. I have been grateful for each day of life since my transplant.

Because of the life-giving blood transfusions and my transplant, I can now live a fairly normal life again, and give back to

the community who gave me a new life by helping others in need. I currently volunteer for an animal shelter and for the Rural Health Clinic Association of Washington, and am planning on doing further volunteer work in the near future.

My bone marrow donor was someone I have never met, nor know his name, and perhaps never will. About a year ago, I wrote a very heartfelt thank you letter to my donor, which was passed on to him through an intermediary. I never did hear back from him, but he surely must know how much his generosity has meant to me, and how lucky and grateful I am. Anyone who has had their life saved by someone knows the feeling of gratitude I am speaking of.

*“I am one of those ‘others,’
who depended on (blood donors)
for my very life.”*

-William Schweinfurth

Equally deserving of my tremendous gratitude are all of the blood donors, who, through the simple act of giving blood helped me to live during the months when we were searching for a potential bone marrow donor.

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Lifelines

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San Francisco, CA 94118

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Suite 136 (Mills Building)
San Francisco, CA 94104

Marin Center

4050 Redwood Hwy
San Rafael, CA 94533

Cupertino Center

19450 Stevens Creek Blvd
Cupertino, CA 95014

Peninsula Center (temporary location)

1730 S. Amphlett Blvd. Suite 116
San Mateo, CA 94402

Redwood City Center

260-C Main Street
Redwood City, CA 94063

North Bay Center

1325 C1 Gateway Blvd
Fairfield, CA 94533

Napa Center

1834-C Soscol Avenue
Napa, CA 94559

Vallejo Center

480 Redwood Street, Suite 31
Vallejo, CA 94590

Shasta Blood Center

2420 Athens Avenue
Redding, CA 96001

Ukiah Valley Center

620 Kings Court, #110
Ukiah, CA 95482

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please contact us at 1-888-393-GIVE.

www.bloodcenters.org

Quick Bits

BCP Receives Bothin Grant

Recently, BCP was the proud recipient of a \$15,000 grant from the Bothin Foundation. The grant money will go toward the purchase of a new bloodmobile, which will enable BCP to travel to more organizations to collect much-needed blood.

“The grant was a way for the Foundation board to recognize the importance of Blood Centers of the Pacific in our local communities,” said Mary Gregory, Program Officer for the Bothin Foundation. “Several of the board members and staff have donated blood and because of their firsthand knowledge of the blood center, they are especially appreciative of their work.”

The Bothin Foundation was established in 1917 and supports low income, at-risk children, youth, and families; the elderly; and the disabled. To a limited extent,

grants are made to environmental agencies, arts organizations that predominately serve youth, and community-based capital campaigns.

BCP extends its heartfelt thanks to the Bothin Foundation for their generous contribution and helping to save lives!

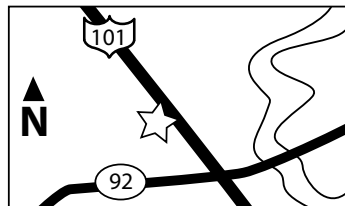
NBC Celebrates its Donors

This past March, the North Bay Center honored its whole blood and apheresis donors. More than 150 attended the luncheon held at the Napa Valley Marriott Hotel and Spa.

Blood recipient turned national blood donation advocate Lauren Larsen, who flew in from Colorado for the event, was the guest speaker. Lauren had used more than 250 units of blood in 2000 when she had complications during childbirth.

The Peninsula Blood Center is moving!

Come see our temporary space, and save a life while you're at it!



Bayshore Corporate Center, next to the Marriott
1730 S. Amphlett Blvd. Suite 116 (behind 1720)
San Mateo, CA 94402

Check out our website at www.bloodcenters.org or call 1-888-393-GIVE for more information and directions.



BSRI – Leading the Way

by | *Angela Woon*

This past March, the Blood Systems Research Institute (BSRI), housed at BCP's Irwin Center – San Francisco, proudly opened its new wing of research laboratories.

The laboratories, which began undergoing construction in last summer, transformed an old auditorium onsite into state-of-the-art facilities, doubling BSRI's laboratories in size by 5,000 square feet. BSRI's new facilities now include immunology and virology laboratories, and general laboratory space for four new senior investigators.

BSRI began humbly in 1959 as a research program of the Irwin Memorial Blood Bank (now BCP) under the leadership and direction of Herbert Perkins, M.D., then Director of Research. In 2004, the Department of Research and Scientific Services became its own branch of Blood Systems Inc. (BSI), and was renamed Blood Systems Research Institute to better reflect what it had "grown up" to become – an organization dedicated to innovation, education and quality research in transfusion medicine. BSI is the nation's second largest blood collection organization and is also affiliated with BCP.

To celebrate its opening, BSRI held a reception attended by representatives from several global blood banking organizations, including Dan Connor, BSI CEO; Nora Hirschler, M.D., BCP President; Lage Anderson, BCP Board Chair; Andrew Heaton, M.D., Chiron Blood Testing Vice President and Chief Medical Officer; Jim MacPherson, America's Blood Centers CEO; Graham Sher, M.D., Ph.D, Canadian Blood Services CEO; Martin Gorham, European Blood Alliance President; Peter Tomasulo, M.D., BSI Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer; Robert Hetzel, M.D., Australian Red Cross Blood Service Chief Executive Officer; and Valerie Ng, M.D., Ph.D., Interim Chair Department of Laboratory Medicine, University of California at San Francisco.

Michael Busch, M.D., Ph.D, Director of BSRI, was on hand to welcome visitors, conduct tours and give an overview of the construction project – its trials, tribulations and successes. He acknowledged those who were instrumental in overseeing the construction of the laboratories from start to completion.

In conjunction with the new laboratories, BSRI also published its first annual report and revamped its website. For more information on BSRI, visit www.bsrisf.org.

BSRI works in tandem with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health and the University of California at San Francisco.



(left to right) Dr. Michael Busch, Dr. Nora Hirschler, Lage Anderson, Martin Gorham, Dan Connor, Dr. Robert Hetzel, Jim MacPherson, Dr. Peter Tomasulo and Dr. Graham Sher (kneeling).



One of BSRI's new state-of-the-art laboratories.

A Big Heart

by *Angela Woon*

This past January, 25-year veteran San Francisco Firefighter Johnny Voelker was involved in a serious motorcycle accident in San Francisco. As a result, he suffered a head trauma and a broken arm, and at press time, is still in a drug-induced coma in the intensive care unit at San Francisco General Hospital.

At the request of his family, a blood drive was held in his honor at the Irwin Center – San Francisco. “His family wanted a sense of purpose,” said fellow SF Firefighter and friend of more than 30 years, Bob Arzave. “Johnny is such a generous guy that they thought this was appropriate – giving back to the community.”

A native of San Francisco, Johnny is a giving individual, according to Bob. He was the chairperson of the SFFD Toy Drive for a decade and

active at the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Camp, which offers activities and services for burn survivors and promotes burn prevention.

Sponsored by Wind and Fire, a Harley Davidson motorcycle club of firefighters, of which Johnny was president, the blood drive was a testament to his generous nature. The drive drew more than 200 people from all over the Bay Area - his family members, friends, firefighters, representatives of Wind and Fire, police officers and Hell’s Angels came to give blood.

“He is a man with the biggest heart you’ll ever meet,” said Bob. “He touches a wide array of people.”



Lining up to donate blood in honor of their friend, Johnny Voelker, at BCP’s Irwin Center.

My Story, continued from page 1

Again, I will never know the names of those countless persons who took the time and made the effort to give of themselves; that is why I am writing this thank you message to acknowledge all blood donors, on behalf of myself and countless others, whom you have saved without even knowing it.

I want to thank each and every person who has donated blood, their time or their resources to their local blood bank, as well as those who have registered with the National Marrow Donor Program or the American Bone Marrow Donor Registry.

Remember that when you give your blood, it will go directly to someone who really needs it; perhaps someone undergoing surgery, a cancer patient or many others in numerous situations of equal urgency.

I encourage everyone who’s eligible to give blood to do so. Donating blood really renews one’s spirit, so in a way, it’s good for you, too!

(Afterwards, you can treat yourself to something as a reward, and not feel guilty about it because the good deed you have just done more than makes up for it!)

Please remember me and all of the other people you are helping whenever you donate.

Thank you for giving me a new life.

Very sincerely and with all gratitude,
William Schweinfurth

SBC's Special Little Visitor

by Angela Woon



Platelet recipient Deena Bhavindhu

This past spring, the Shasta Blood Center – Redding (SBC) welcomed a very special visitor – little Deena Bhavindhu and her adoptive parents, Dino and Nipa.

You may recall the touching story of Deena when BCP featured her in *Lifelines* a few years ago. Deena, now 6 years old and a Lassen View Elementary School student, suffers from thrombocytopenia, a disease that makes her bone marrow unable to produce an

ample amount of platelets. This means if Deena bruises or cuts herself, her blood does not have the ability to clot and the results could be fatal.

Owners of a Thai restaurant in Alturas, Dino and Nipa recently moved their family and opened another restaurant in Redding, so their daughter could live closer to a larger hospital. Deena receives lifesaving transfusions of platelets each week at Mercy Medical Center, one of the local hospitals SBC serves.

“The staff were thrilled by Deena’s visit to say the least!” said Ellie Delgado, Administrative Director at SBC. “Her dad told us, ‘Thank you for keeping her alive’ and needless to say, there weren’t many dry eyes in the house.”

Deena is currently on the national and worldwide bone marrow registries in the search for a potential bone marrow match to save

her life. The chances of finding a match are as low as 20 percent for minorities, compared to 80 percent for Caucasians, according to the National Bone Marrow Program.

Deena’s most recent strand of hope was when her adoptive parents found her biological mother in Thailand who was pregnant. Unfortunately, the new baby was not a match.

But still, Deena and her family have not given up – they continue to hope.

“And to keep it all in perspective,” said Ellie. “After all the attention and oohs and ahs, Deena said, ‘Got any snacks?’”

“After all the attention and oohs and ahs, Deena said, ‘Got any snacks?’”

-Ellie Delgado, SBC Administrative Director

If you’d like to help Deena, here are a few ways:

- A fund has been established at Plumas Bank for Deena Bhavindhu, please call (530) 233-6311.
- Potential bone marrow donors, particularly of Thai ethnicity, please call the Shasta Blood Center at (530) 246-2400.
- For more information on the National Marrow Donor Program, please visit www.marrow.org.

(Source: *Record Searchlight*)

World Blood Donor Day

by Angela Woon

Not only is June 14th, the birthday of Karl Landsteiner, the Nobel prize winner who discovered the ABO blood group system, but it has also been designated as World Blood Donor Day.

World Blood Donor Day “provides a unique opportunity to give thanks to those very special people who provide the foundation of a safe blood supply, available to all patients requiring transfusion.”

Built on the success of World Health Day 2000, which celebrated the theme “Blood Save Lives. Safe Blood Starts With Me,”

World Blood Donor Day is co-sponsored by the World Health Organization and three major organizations working for voluntary non-remunerated blood donation: the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations and the International Society of Blood Transfusion.

Remembering Marie

by *Angela Woon*



Marie Airey and her therapy puppy Joy in December 2004

Each year, more than 4.5 million lives are saved by blood transfusions in the United States. But while many lives are saved because of blood, life, unfortunately, has its harsh realities and blood sometimes can only sustain a person's life until the disease takes over the body. This is the story of one such brave young woman's life. Her name was Marie Airey.

Barry Airey, Marie's father, remembers his daughter as a resourceful and outgoing young woman who loved life and the ocean, and knew what she wanted in life. She worked as an assistant curator in the invertebrate department at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco and was pursuing her Master's Degree in Evolutionary Biology at San Francisco State University.

Marie was diagnosed with leukemia at age 26 and battled the disease for two years before she passed away on January 16, 2005, a week after she turned 28. "Marie would not have been able to fight this dreadful disease for two years if not for the availability of blood and platelet transfusions," said Syd Airey, Marie's mother.

As a tribute to their daughter, her parents held a blood drive in her honor. "A few days after her daughter passed away, Syd Airey called me," said Gertrude Stopper, BCP's Account Representative. "She wanted to hold a blood drive in Marie's memoriam and to give back to the community."

That tribute blood drive was held in the BCP bloodmobile outside the Aireys' home in Colma on February 4th. According to Gertrude, more than 150 family members, friends, neighbors and loved ones attended the blood drive. Thirty-one units of blood were collected and those who couldn't give blood, made financial donations in Marie's memory. The California Academy of Sciences also held a blood drive in her memory, and Broadmore Property Owners Association and Playmates Cooperative Nursery School will be holding drives in her honor this spring.

One of Marie's wishes before she passed away, was to donate a diamond she had received as a gift. Her parents fulfilled that wish when they visited the Irwin Center – San Francisco, to present their daughter's diamond to Nora Hirschler, M.D., BCP's President. "Marie's gift to us has touched our hearts," said Dr. Hirschler. "Her memory will live on with us at BCP and in those whose lives were touched by this extraordinary woman. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Airey family."

One of Marie's wishes before she passed away, was to donate a diamond she had received as a gift.

Marie is survived and fondly remembered by her parents, younger brother and all those who knew her. She will be missed.



BCP President Dr. Nora Hirschler, accepting Marie's diamond on BCP's behalf, from Syd and Barry Airey.

A Tale of Two Sister-in-Laws

by Mark Noonan

It is the tale of two sister-in-laws helping to save lives. Laura Reuter is the blood drive coordinator in the rural town of Weed, CA, while approximately 60 miles away, her sister-in-law, Cecilia Reuter, coordinates blood drives in Fort Jones, CA.

Both are extraordinary women putting forth extraordinary efforts. Laura got involved with the Weed community blood drive in 1984 as part of a community service project that her sorority, Beta Sigma Phi, had taken on. She began as co-coordinator with one of her sorority sisters, Margie Michelon, and together they took an effort with an average of only 12 to 15 donors at an event, and by dint of hard work and enthusiasm grew it to nearly 100 regular donors. She attributes the education they receive from the blood center regarding the importance and benefits of blood donation as sparking her enthusiasm for these efforts.

Cecilia began her involvement as a volunteer assisting Laura at the Weed Community blood drives and this led her to take on the responsibilities of coordinating the Fort Jones Community blood drives. Both endeavors have resulted in a strong group of volunteers who support the events by regularly providing much sought after homemade baked goodies and general assistance. This support creates an environment that makes these community events ones that the donors enjoy and look forward to.

The seeds of the Reuter sister-in-laws' success lie in their boundless energy and enthusiasm, in addition to their ability to communicate the need for and importance of blood donation and the friendly environment they establish at these events. We are grateful to these ladies and feel very fortunate to be able to partner with them in these lifesaving efforts. Thank you Laura and Cecilia!

A Familiar Face

by Angela Woon



BCP Volunteer Georgann Pardee

If anyone is a familiar face at the Marin Center – San Rafael (MC), it is Georgann Pardee. A volunteer-turned employee-turned volunteer (again!), Georgann has been with BCP for more than 17 years.

“I started volunteering in 1988,” said Georgann. “Then I lost my husband in 1990 and worked as a receptionist at the front desk.” After 10 years as a BCP employee, Georgann switched roles and

began volunteering at the donor canteen again.

Not only do employees and donors recognize her, but Georgann remembers them too. “I test myself when people come in,” she said. “I try to prove to myself that I remember a face and ask them if they are Mary, etc...and most of the time, I get it right!”

According to Jovette Steffan, head nurse at the MC, everyone likes Georgann. “She has never lost her cool, she is very much the lady,”

she said. “We were sad that she wasn't our receptionist anymore but we're glad that she helps us out at the canteen.”

“I liked being both a volunteer and an employee,” said Georgann. “I enjoyed the routine at the desk but with the advent of computers, I wasn't too literate with that, so I made the move to the canteen and I enjoy that too!” Georgann, a retired dietician and hospital service director, can be seen volunteering at the MC canteen every Thursday.

Born in Michigan, Georgann moved around the country to Chicago, Connecticut and New York, just to name a few, before settling in Fairfax, CA, where she has lived for the past 18 years.

Retired for a number of years, Georgann is still very active in the community. She volunteers at the Marin General Hospital and College of Marin as well. She has two children and is a grandmother to eight.

We're glad you're a familiar face among us, Georgann!



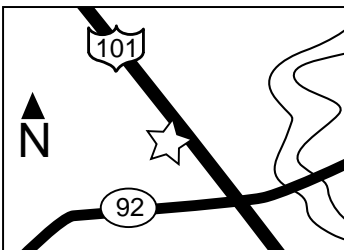
Blood Centers *of the Pacific*

270 Masonic Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94118

lifelines

ÒLive as if everything you do will eventually be known.
- Hugh Prather

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