



NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

Contact: Ken Dey
(208) 381-2894 (office)
(208) 631-5322 (cell)
Deyke@slrmc.org

St. Luke's to close its marrow donor program

New donor quotas result in regional consolidation of smaller programs

Boise – Changes to the requirements for recruiting bone marrow donors are causing the closure of St. Luke's Mountain States Tumor Institute's (MSTI) Bone Marrow Donor Program.

Smaller marrow donor programs are now consolidating regionally to ensure they can meet the new requirements enacted by the National Marrow Donor Program to encourage more minority donors.

The St. Luke's program was the last remaining donor program in the Treasure Valley. Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center had a program, but closed it in April.

Although it hasn't been finalized yet, potential donors from the Treasure Valley may be managed by the Inland Northwest Blood Center in Spokane, Wash.

Mark Allen, the coordinator for St. Luke's program, said the demographic profile of the region meant the program couldn't meet the requirement to recruit at least 575 minority donors a year.

"We understand the need to recruit more minority donors, but closing the St. Luke's program is not an option we would have preferred," Allen said.

The national program instituted the new requirements to help address what they say is an increasing shortage of minority donors. Because tissue types are inherited, patients are more likely to match someone from their own race or ethnicity.

Every year, 10,000 Americans are diagnosed with a life-threatening disease that can only be cured with a bone marrow transplant. But just 30 percent of those Americans can find a suitable donor within their family. The remaining must rely on finding a match through the donor program.

Bone marrow transplants are often the best or only hope for patients suffering from leukemia, lymphoma or other life-threatening diseases.

Since The National Marrow Donor program began in 1987, it has facilitated more than 30,000 transplants by identifying matching donors.

Since St. Luke's started its program in 1991, there have been 120 positive donor matches for patients in need of a transplant.

Allen said the St. Luke's program will close Sept. 30..

Despite the closure of the program, Allen said people interested in becoming donors can still enroll online at www.marrows.org. Donors, however, may have to pay a one-time charge of \$52 to offset the cost of the required DNA testing kit.

St. Luke's and the National Marrow Donor Program had previously been covering the cost for donors who registered through the St. Luke's program.

The closure of the program doesn't affect St. Luke's MSTI's Blood and Marrow Transplant Program – the first and only one of its type in Idaho.

St. Luke's MSTI is one of the Northwest's most respected cancer care centers providing the region's most advanced cancer care therapies with the added benefit of allowing most patients to remain close to home.

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On the Web:

St. Luke's Mountain States Tumor Institute

http://www.stlukesonline.org/specialties_and_services/Cancer_Care/index.php

National Marrow Donor Program

www.marrows.org