

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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I Was One in 100 and I Helped Save a Life

Editor, please note: there is a sidebar at the end of this article, containing information about the blood drive/bone marrow donation booth in Hemingford, August 7).

Few people get the chance to step in front of a speeding bullet or pull someone from a burning car to save their lives. But, a local woman has found a way to save a life and is excited to share with others.

Jodi Sellman, a ranch wife from south of Chadron, lost her sister to brain cancer. She contributed to various causes, and attended the Festival of Hope in Scottsbluff annually, but had been looking for a direct way to help others whose lives were affected by cancer. Her opportunity came in the form of a friend's post on Facebook – the friend was soliciting bone marrow registrations to help a little girl with cancer and provided a link to DKMS (an international bone marrow donor center).

Sellman registered in 2010 and earlier this year was able to donate bone marrow and helped save the life of a young boy somewhere in the United States. The process for registry and donation was simple, Sellman said. The registry kit includes two cheek swabs, a one-page form with simple health questions and postage paid envelope.

Earlier this year, Sellman got the call she was a possible match for a young man with leukemia. Further health screenings and DNA testing were conducted to confirm the results and declare the match.

In the week prior to the procedure she was given injections to build up her blood cells which she said gave her some flu like symptoms, but was able to continue her regular exercise program, work alongside husband Adam on the ranch and corral her two young children Jake and Bailey.

Then, Sellman and a companion traveled to a nearby major hospital to donate the marrow. The process, known as Peripheral Blood Stem Cells or PBSC, involved an IV in her left arm, drawing blood into a filter where the white blood cells were extracted. The remaining red blood cells and plasma were then sent directly back into her right arm.

"The process was easy, relatively painless and free," Sellman said. Her expenses and the costs of the PBSC procedure were covered through the recipient's insurance.

Sellman has begun a personal drive to get others registered by offering a hometown registry as part of a blood drive in Hemingford during the county fair. On August 7, the Hemingford Volunteer Fire Department will host their semi-annual blood drive; Sellman has partnered with Panhandle Public Health District to man a booth at the blood drive to offer sign up kits.

Odds are about one in every 100 people who is screened will be a match. "My goal," Sellman said, "is to register 500 people from this area."

The larger the pool of donors, the greater the chance a patient can find a suitable donor match. Donors must be adults, ages 18-55 and in good health.

If you would like to receive a screening kit mailed directly to your home or if you would like screening kits to be offered at an event in your area, please contact Panhandle Public Health District at 308-487-3600 Ext. 105. For more information about the process, go to getswabbed.org.

SIDEBAR: HVFD Blood Drive is Wednesday, August 7 from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Hemingford Volunteer Fire Department. Panhandle Public Health District will man a booth at the blood drive to register bone marrow donors.