

Bone marrow drive aims to save sister, others' lives

By Parker Philpot
Sentinel-Voice

Greek Gray is the sister of Farrah Gray, 21, the headline-making, author, philanthropist, African-American young legend, who earned his first million at age 14 and continues his entrepreneurial ascent to new realms, but who has now turned his attention, again, to saving the life of his big sister and countless others. Greek Gray is grateful in the midst of her struggle with leukemia and the search for a life-saving bone marrow donor match.

The Las Vegas Bone Marrow Drive is this Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Monte Carlo Resort & Casino Banquet Hall at 3770 Las Vegas Blvd South near Tropicana.

Farrah Gray and his sister are urging the community, everyone, to stop by and give a small blood sample to become a part of the national registry from which potential donors are selected for the many patients awaiting treatment. Greek Gray, 34, is among them once again.

She was a fitness and exercise instructor, health writer and business owner diagnosed on her 33rd birthday with AML, a prevalent and severe form of leukemia, a blood disorder. After only a six-month remission, she is facing relapse.

Farrah says his sister has an urgent need — and they both quickly point out that so many others are in need, too — for a bone marrow transplant, a treatment option with a successful track record for helping leukemia patients live.

Each year, more than 35,000 children and adults in the United States are diag-

nosed with diseases for which a marrow or blood cell transplant could be a cure, according to the National Marrow Donor Program.

"My campaign is to bring a [bone marrow] transplant not only to my sister but to the many patients worldwide ...and increase the number of donors in the National Marrow Donor Program Registry," said Farrah Gray.

Although African-Americans make up 12 percent of the population, they only account for 6 percent of the bone marrow registry. For many Black children and adults, like Greek Gray, that small percentage can mean the difference between life and death.

The added challenge for some patients seeking a match is searching for an African-American donor.

Bone marrow and blood cell transplants require matching certain tissue traits of the donor and patient. Because these traits are inherited, a patient's most likely match is someone of the same heritage.

Seventy percent of patients do not have a matched donor in their family.

Greek is grateful for the nationwide outpouring of response to the bone marrow drives her brother has personally spearheaded in his duel quest to find his sister's ideal match and matches for thousands of other patients.

The Greek Gray Leukemia Foundation was established to raise awareness about the disease, treatment options and the immediate need for increasing ethnic diversity in the bone marrow registry.

The national registry reports the number of African-

Americans registered "is quite low," insufficient numbers to serve the waiting list of Black patients.

The foundation's website has more information about Greek's personal trials with leukemia, donor testing options and the need for ethnic-specific donor registration at www.gglf.org.

The siblings said in their online statement, "We no longer have the forgiveness of time."

The bone marrow drive this weekend is for the public to become registered, by simply giving a blood sample, not for actual marrow testing, Farrah explained. The registry is available so that patients in need can be cross-typed with potential donors who can then be further tested for suitability as a bone marrow donor candidate, the organizers explained.

A person of any race, ethnicity or gender who is 18 to 60 years old (up until 61st birthday) and who meets donation health guidelines can become a potential volunteer donor.

Farrah Gray encourages everyone to be mindful and each person to care and think, "It could be me" or a family member in need of a life-saving transplant at any time.

Greek has her own time-critical need, but in her adversity shows her gratitude for being able to help others even as she struggles:

"My fight is not just with me anymore; it is for others afflicted with leukemia that will be able to be served by the Greek Gray Leukemia Foundation. I know that my foundation can't save the world or, for that matter, (See Marrow, Page 6)

Walking

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Pearson said.

West Las Vegas was selected as the marching grounds because of the historical significance of that area.

"When African-Americans first came here [to Las Vegas], that's where they lived," Pearson said. He said that as Las Vegas continues to grow, West Las Vegas is being pushed aside and ignored.

"When you look at the growth of Las Vegas, we have to be reminded that our area hasn't been part of that growth," he said.

Pearson added, "Hopefully [this march] can be the catalyst for creative discussion among African-American's in Las Vegas."

"[The march] is important because we need to take the opportunity to come together to do something positive and celebrate our

community in a positive manner," committee member Evans explained.

During Black History Month, famous leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks are celebrated for their efforts. The march committee feels the celebration of local pioneers and leaders is a huge part that is missing from the month's celebration.

The event organizers developed a plan to honor and give more notoriety to these local leaders.

"We're asking people to make signs and posters with people they admire on them, someone who makes a difference in their lives and our community," Evans said.

This is the inaugural year for the march, but there are plans to make the event annual.

For more information contact Pearson at 275-9200.

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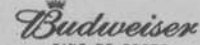
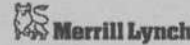
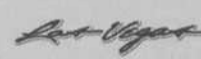
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