

GIVING is the word of the day. I've given my time to read to 3rd and 5th graders through the Ottawa Reads program. I've organized a men's pickup hockey team for the last 25 years. For an hour and half a week, I'm the Akela for the 114th Ottawa cub pack. But let's go back a few years when I was 17 years old, I started giving blood donations. Initially it was for the wrong reason; the blood donor card could be used as an Age of Majority card. As the years progressed, I've donated some 60 pints of blood.

During 1996 while working at Nortel, one of colleague's children was diagnosed with leukemia. He sent out a plea for everyone to get tested for a possible blood marrow match. It was a simple blood test so with my blood donation background, it was no big deal. I moved to another job and lost contact with the colleague so I never knew what happened to his child.

Every year after that, around my birthday, I received a birthday card from the Red Cross a.k.a. Canadian Blood Services (CBS) reminding me that I'm still a registered in the blood marrow registry.

In April 2000 the CBS called indicating that I might be a possible match. If I was interested then I could not travel outside North America. Again in July they called and said no travelling outside Canada. September rolled around and they asked me not to travel. I still had no idea who needed my bone marrow. It's now the end of September and they call and ask for the last time "Do you still want to donate your bone marrow." I said "Of course" and then they reminded me I couldn't back out now as the recipient would now be undergoing extensive treatment to kill off their bone marrow to make their body ready for my bone marrow. On October 10, 2000, Michele took me to the Ottawa General Hospital in the morning. After getting prepped, they started to wheel me to the operating room when they told me if they do not get enough marrow out of my hip bones they would need to go through my sternum; "wait a minute, no one told me that"!

Everything went well and I was home by 2:00 pm. Later that night, I stood in the driveway showing off my bandages covering the new holes to my neighbours.

Back in May, I told my cub pack that I might be donating my blood marrow. At the same time I was moving up to the Scout troop but I would return to the pack to share my story. For my efforts, Scouts Canada awarded me the Meritorious Service award.

On October 31, 2001, my recipient Jacky called me – we had both given CBS our permission to contact each other since we were unknown donor/recipient. She was so happy to have reached us since I was getting ready to taking my family and Dad to England for a first time to visit his father's home town. It certainly had been a year. We have stayed in touch through snail mail, email and now Facebook. We met Jacky's son Isaac, his wife Jennifer and their daughter Sidney in June 2007 when they came to Niagara Falls for a family wedding. It was an emotional visit and we could tell that Isaac was really appreciative for what I did – for me it was just giving my bone marrow.

Over this past year Michele has been sending messages to Jacky's daughters. Her daughter, Jenifer invited us to her wedding and was extremely excited that we could surprise her mother

Jacky. Michele and I arrived on August 13 and went to Jenifer's home on the 14th to meet Jacky. Jacky was so surprised that she called me "Brian", she was shocked. At the wedding and reception, I met and was hugged by many relatives – all were very thankful that I saved their mother, grandmother, aunt and friend. For Jenifer it meant having her mother at her wedding – an incredible gift.

When Jacky had her bone marrow transplant she had three wishes: 1. To go whale watching which she did that last year, 2. meet Michele and I – well we just did that and 3. an Alaskan Cruise. Jacky is not 100% but she has a lot more to live for. She is a true fighter. Since she had my bone marrow her daughter Heather was pregnant with Jacky's first grandchild Aaron, then came Emma, Sidney, Jacob and Ethan. I now have all these great "pseudo" grandkids.

One funny point that we discovered was Jacky was allergic to peanuts and oranges before the transplant but she can now enjoy them.

I went to Calgary knowing that I helped one person but left Calgary knowing we now have this bigger family out west who we seems to have known for years.