

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day Lake Region Health-care's health and wellness segment where we feature news and information that you can use to live a healthier lifestyle. This is Katie Johnson and I have 2 guests joining me this morning to talk about an opportunity that Lake Region Healthcare and Green Plains in Fergus Falls are partnering together to offer to promote bone marrow donors and to encourage our community to sign up for this opportunity. I have Anthony Hicks from Green Plains with me this morning, and on the phone, from Missouri, I have Adja Jones and she is a bone marrow donor herself who's going to share what that experience is like. I'd like to start with you, Adja, and just talk a little bit about how and why you chose to become a donor.

Adja Jones: Sure, Katie. I work at Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri. I work in our Athletics department, and in the fall of 2014 we actually had one of our softball players was diagnosed with cancer and so we held a bone marrow donor registration in the fall of '14 for her. I was a little hesitant. I didn't really know what that meant, but our community rallied around her, and so, I decided that I was going to go ahead and get swabbed because that's what you do. You just put a little swab in your mouth and they can check and see if you are a match for a patient who needs bone marrow. Decided to go ahead and do that in support of Ally, my softball player and at that time, I didn't really know what that meant, but I was all on board for helping out. I did it, and then contacted about a year later. Wasn't anticipating that, but it happened. I was definitely all for helping her out if I could.

Katie Johnson: But I'm assuming that when you say you were contacted a year later, it wasn't to help Ally. Is that true?

Adja Jones: That is correct.

Katie Johnson: Because from what I understand, it's very rare for matches to happen, so if you have a family or a friend that you are wanting to help, the chances are that you are going to be a match for them are really very slim.

Adja Jones: That is a good point, yes.

Katie Johnson: So you were contacted though, a year later, and tell us more about that.

Adja Jones: Sure. Ally did find someone to donate for her, which was fantastic, but I was actually on a run in November of 2015 and I got an email from Delete Blood Cancer and said that I was a potential match for a patient. Kind of tricked me a little bit. I had to stop and think about what in the world they were talking about. Read through the email and decided to go ahead and give the agency a call and find out a little more about the process and everything. Yeah, come to find out I matched very closely with what I would find out was a 7 year old boy. That kind of started a process that rocked my whole world. Didn't know too much at the time I just knew that a child had cancer and I could potentially help. I decided at that point in time, after about a week deliberation, talking to my family, that I was going to go ahead

and go through the process of donating.

Katie Johnson: So I understand that there are 2 ways that you can donate, which is probably what you were learning as you contemplated this. That you can either donate via what's called a PBSC- peripheral blood stem cell collection, or bone marrow donation, and that the patient's doctor actually chooses which method will promise the best outcome for the patient. That's one of the things that we want to make sure that people who are thinking about this know, that we want registrants to be comfortable moving forward with either method. Tell me about what you learned about that and what type of method you underwent and what it was like.

Adja Jones: Sure. I heard that the most common is the peripheral blood stem cell, which is almost like giving blood really. That's kind of what the set up looks like. You sit in a chair; they take it out through your arm and so that was one way. My doctor actually decided that the actual bone marrow harvest, what they call it (it sounds really scary, but it's not as bad as it sounds) was actually gonna be more beneficial for the patient. What that consists of is a minor surgery. You do go under anesthesia. Basically, what they do is they make little incisions in your back. I have 2 little scars from that and they basically pump out the bone marrow through your lower back area. I think the surgery in total took about an hour, hour and a half, but they definitely wanted to make sure that my health was important as well as the patient. It just seemed that that was going to work out better for me, but that is actually less likely that it is the actual bone marrow harvest. It's more of a chance that you'll go ahead and give through the peripheral blood stem cells.

Katie Johnson: Right. From what I've heard it's about 70% of the donations that happen are through that blood stem cell, more like giving blood like you mentioned. How did it feel afterwards, both physically and emotionally?

Adja Jones: Well, it was kind of rough, even just getting up. My mother and I actually went up together to actually do the surgery because I had to do it outside of Missouri. So the weather was really bad and I didn't know if I was gonna make it to the hospital that I was supposed to actually have my surgery. I think my emotions were already running really high, but afterwards, I did feel a little down and out, which is gonna happen. I couldn't walk for a few hours. Getting used to walking again because you did have some pain through your lower back and your legs and things like that. There was some pain, you know, it wasn't completely unbearable. It did hurt, it didn't feel fantastic. I was really cold after the surgery too, you have that much fluid pumped out of your body and everything and you do kind of feel that. It did take me a little bit of time to recover.

I did actually leave the hospital where I was at and get on a plane and fly home about a day and a half later. It is definitely possible. Every donor is a little bit different. I felt fantastic though. I felt really good about what I was doing, and even though there was pain and everything, I would go back and do it again because they came in and told me, "Your bone marrow's been shipped. It's on a plane to get to the patient. We're trying to keep you updated." It was just a really good feeling

overall, despite feeling a little yucky after the actual surgery.

Katie Johnson: I can imagine. A day and a half and you're back on the plane, how about long term? Any long term side effects?

Adja Jones: Sure. With long term, it has been a little bit of a rocky road here and there. I think I tried to rush into feeling better and getting back to my daily activities. I enjoyed running and exercising and stuff, so a couple months after the surgery that still was difficult for me because your body is still repairing itself. I tried to jump in there a little too quick. Now, every donor is different, but I would say after probably a solid 6 and a half months, I feel back to normal. I feel great now. I do feel back to normal at this point.

Katie Johnson: What about your recipient? Do you know anything about how that 7 year old is doing as a result of your donation? Do they share that with the donor?

Adja Jones: Unfortunately, I have not heard anything yet. They give you about a year that you could reach out to the family or vice versa. Realistically, I probably wouldn't hear from them until January anyway, but I have been seeking out opportunities to hear back about at least the status of the recipient at this time.

Katie Johnson: I'm curious. What would you tell someone who's thinking about being screened to be a donor?

Adja Jones: I would definitely tell them to keep an open mind, to really learn as much as you can about the process. I know that I don't think that I fully understood what was going on when I initially signed up. I just knew that if I could help, I want to do that, but looking back though, I think that it was a really good decision for me. I have a little sister who is 10 years old now and I had a cousin who was diagnosed with cancer when she was around 7 or 8, so it made it a lot easier for me, maybe, but if you don't want to that's completely understandable. Just know you're going to be making a huge difference regardless if you go through and at least register. Just get your cheek swabbed. There is a chance for you to get more information after that process. To consider things, think about the impact that you could be making. Seems like a small price to pay to potentially give someone the gift of life.

Katie Johnson: It certainly does, and we appreciate so much that you're willing to share your experience and help others learn more about that possibility they might have to help save someone else's life as well. Anything else you'd like to add from your perspective as a donor, Adja?

Adja Jones: I just think ... Get out there and at least go and talk to somebody about it and learn a little more. You might surprise yourself and decide to go ahead and jump on in. I definitely encourage everyone to do that.

Katie Johnson: Well, thank you again so much for your time today. I know that you have other things to do. I'm gonna let you go. Say thank you again and talk some more with Anthony, now, about the upcoming opportunities that our listeners have to

participate in a swabbing event. Thanks, Adja.

Adja Jones: Wonderful. Thank you so much and good luck.

Katie Johnson: So, Anthony, Green Plains approached Lake Region Healthcare about this opportunity and I'd like to know why it is that you decided to sponsor this event.

Anthony Hicks: Green Plains is a national company spread all over the United States and through one of my colleagues they had somebody that was in need of a transplant. Obviously they had difficulty finding a match. The CEO of our company, Todd Becker, decided that as a company, we should have an initiative to try to encourage people to register for donations. So we launched that campaign earlier this summer. We're in that process of gearing up for the week of the 12th of September, where we hope to collect a number of donations, or registrations for donors.

Katie Johnson: As I mentioned as we were talking with Adja, it's difficult to find matches for these patients who have blood cancer and need to have a donor, so the more people that we can get swabbed, the more chances there are for the people out there who are dealing with blood cancer.

Anthony Hicks: That's correct. Approximately 70% of people are not a match. Familial matches are not always that great. The chances of your parents being a match to you are pretty slim. There's more opportunity for siblings to be a match than parents. More often than not, you're actually looking at somebody outside of even the family to be the donor.

Katie Johnson: So, as we try to educate the public about what that might be like, I think we've done that pretty well with Adja, let's talk now about how they can take that next step. When are we gonna have these screening events and where, and what will the screening entail?

Anthony Hicks: We've been very fortunate that together with, obviously Lake Region and we've also been able to set up a donor collection registration with the YMCA and M State and get a lot of community support in terms of getting out the message for people to go to one of those centers and which to donate. The registration is very simple. It's a basic form that requires some family health information and then the swab itself is just literally 30 seconds on the inside of each cheek. That goes into an envelope and it goes off to New York where they will obviously run that for DNA and then put that in a data bank. Down the road, obviously if you are a match then you might receive a call.

The process of collection and registration for a donor is extremely simple. There's no pain involved in that. It's just 2 swabs and putting it in an envelope. The whole process probably takes no more than 10 minutes.

Katie Johnson: 10 minutes of your time, 3 opportunities to do it. Let's talk about those dates and

places.

Anthony Hicks: Right, those dates and places are starting on Tuesday the 13th of September and we'll be at the YMCA between 5 o'clock and 7 o'clock. The second drive will be at the Lake Region Cancer Center. We're gonna set up in the conference room there 11 o'clock in the morning until around 7 o'clock in the evening. The third opportunity is through M State, and again that's the student body and the faculty members through David Jensen are keen to help and that would run between 10 o'clock in the morning and 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

Katie Johnson: Three opportunities, all kinds of hours and locations. Really no excuse. If you are between 18 and 55 and in good health, we really invite you to consider just stopping in, giving 10 minutes to have a quick little swab of your cheek, fill out the form. You'll be on your way and as Adja mentioned, it could be a year later that you might get this phone call that you're a match with someone and at that time you do have the opportunity to think about this further. Explore what your options might be and really think about if this is a good time and fit for you to be that donor.

Anthony Hicks: That's correct. Obviously, you go into a database but at the end of the day, a year, 5 years from now things in your life might be different.

Katie Johnson: Right.

Anthony Hicks: If it doesn't fit you still have that opportunity.

Katie Johnson: But we really do want to encourage anyone who has this desire to help other people to potentially save a life and to join this cause to delete blood cancer to join us at one of these locations. Again, Tuesday September 13th at the YMCA, Wednesday the 14th at the Cancer Center, right on Cascade, and Thursday the 15th at M State. Anything else you'd like to add, Anthony?

Anthony Hicks: Green Plains is also, to encourage people to come, for every 100 participants that are there, we will give away an iPad in a drawing. There's opportunity to walk away with something as a gift out of this.

Katie Johnson: That's fantastic. Not only feel good about it, but have a chance to win an iPad as well. Well, Anthony Hicks, thank you so much for joining us and to Green Plains for helping to make this drive in Fergus Falls possible. To help Delete Blood Cancer and to encourage all of our listeners help potentially save a life by being swabbed on September 13th, 14th, or 15th. All of this information is on our website at lrhc.org. If you have questions, please check that out, otherwise join us and get yourself swabbed and potentially save a life with. Thanks, Anthony.

Anthony Hicks: Thank you.

Katie Johnson: Anthony Hicks from Green Plains and Adja Jones, bone marrow donor my guests today on Apple a Day, and all of us reminding you that there is so much to do here.

Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.