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CANADIAN BLOOD SERVICES

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Partners United in Saving Lives

Over 800 patients in Canada currently searching for life-saving stem cell match.

OTTAWA, Nov. 16 /CNW Telbec/ - From November 14th through 21st, Canadian Blood Services' stem cell program, the OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network, is marking National Stem Cell Awareness Week with its Partners Uniting Lives campaign.

Sadly, only 30 per cent of patients in need of a stem cell transplant will find a match within their own family - the rest turn to OneMatch. The network is currently searching for stem cell matches for over 800 patients across the country - patients suffering from life-threatening illnesses such leukemia, aplastic anaemia or various immune disorders.

Diversity continues to be a significant concern for OneMatch, but with the collective efforts of various communities groups working side-by-side with OneMatch, we are seeing significant progress - especially bringing new, healthy, ethnically diverse donors to the network.

Given that the best chance of finding a match for patients is within their own ethnic group, reaching out to diverse communities is a major part of OneMatch's community engagement strategy. Chinese Canadians in particular are showing stronger representation within OneMatch thanks to the applied efforts of community groups like OtherHalf Chinese Stem Cell Initiative. In 2007, there were only 511 new registrants from Chinese/Asian heritage on the stem cell network. Today, Canada's network includes over 4,838 new searchable registrants of this ethnic background. Even so, there is still a long way to go, and not just in the Chinese community: currently, 28 per cent of the patients waiting for a transplant are ethnically diverse, while only 18 per cent of current registrants are from a diverse heritage.

"Unfortunately, we continue to need more ethnically diverse donors to keep up with the over 800 patients currently waiting for an unrelated match," confirms Jennifer Philippe, "Director, OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network, "But it doesn't stop just there."

"An effective partnership at OneMatch is all about building an alliance of civically and socially responsible people who want to make a difference in today's world by either becoming a stem cell donor or contributing to the many other parts that make up Canada's stem cell network. Each of our partners is acutely important to building a stem cell program for all Canadians that addresses such vital issues as diversity, but at the same time, offers practical and financial support through fund-raising to our existing or new programs," explains Philippe.

"Every person who joins the program may not be asked to donate stem cells; but every person who joins gives additional hope to a stem cell transplant patient, no matter how they help. This action may very well be the one match that saves a life," concludes Philippe.

Across the country, events will be held highlighting everything from DNA sample collection (buccal swabbing), to community sponsored 'In Honour' blood donor clinics. Each event is strategically positioned to call attention to the many steps to providing healthy and committed stem cell donors for Canada's stem cell network.

Recognizing this critical need, many partners have joined with OneMatch to unite lives in Canada, both throughout the year, and during the Awareness week. Each of our partners has found a unique and invaluable way to contribute to the solution by either hosting 'swabbing' events, raising awareness within their community or providing financial support to Canadian Blood Services' Foundation.



If you would like to register as a possible stem cell donor, the quickest way is through our online registration form at www.onematch.ca. You can also call Canadian Blood Services at 1 888 2 DONATE (1-888-236-6283) to have a registration package mailed to your address.

About Canadian Blood Services

Canadian Blood Services is a national, not-for-profit charitable organization that manages the supply of blood and blood products in all provinces and territories outside of Quebec. Canadian Blood Services also oversees the OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network, and provides national leadership for organ and tissue donation and transplantation. Canadian Blood Services operates 41 permanent collection sites and more than 20,000 donor clinics annually. The provincial and territorial Ministries of Health provide operational funding to Canadian Blood Services. The federal government, through Health Canada, is responsible for regulating the blood system. For more information, please visit our Web site at www.blood.ca.

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