



Jay Fleming of Georgetown had the chance over the Christmas holidays to meet the German man who received his bone marrow. Pictured in Germany are from left Jay, Stefan Rinn (the bone marrow recipient) Angela Fleming (Jay's wife) and Stephan Schmiesing (Stefan's stepson).

Photo courtesy  
Ulrike Schmiesing-Rinn

## Donation changed men's lives

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Doctors chose to go ahead with the transplant and in July 2008 at McMaster University Medical Centre Fleming donated his bone marrow.

The marrow was taken from his iliac crest (pelvic bones) under general anesthesia in July 2008.

Fleming said it was "pretty painful" and he was on Tylenol 4s for about a week afterward. "It's more than just pain. It takes a lot out of you," he said.

Despite the pain, Fleming is glad he donated his bone marrow.

"Words cannot explain how life changing this is," said Fleming. He said it's made him realize just how important good health is and how lucky people are to have it.

"Don't take anything for granted because you never know what's going to happen," he said.

When Fleming donated his bone marrow he didn't know who the recipient was, but a year after the match the One Match Stem Cell and Marrow Network sent out queries to the two men.

Both were interested in learning who the other was, and email addresses were exchanged.

Fleming and Rinn, who doesn't speak English, initially met through email, they corresponded, and over the last Christmas holiday Jay and his wife Angela decided to fly to Germany to surprise Stefan.

Stefan's family knew they were coming, but he had no idea.

"He didn't know who we were," said Jay. But when he learned who he was, "he gave me a big hug."

"I call him my blood brother, and I also told my mom she has a new son," said Fleming.

He said Rinn is doing well and getting

stronger every day. His leukemia is in remission Fleming said. Rinn and his wife are hoping to visit Fleming and his wife this summer.

Rinn's wife said after the bone marrow transplant her husband is "totally normal, like any other person," and he no longer requires medication.

"We are so happy," said Rinn's wife. "I cannot tell you. It's so great, so fantastic. Angela and Jay are wonderful people."

In a bone marrow transplant a person's diseased marrow is replaced with healthy marrow from a donor. To prepare for the transplant the recipient is usually given high doses of radiation and or chemotherapy to destroy the diseased marrow.

A variety of disorders and diseases are treated with stem cell transplants including blood-related diseases such as leukemia, aplastic anemia and inherited immune system and metabolic disorders.

Mary Lynn Pride of OneMatch said in Canada there are about 800 people awaiting a stem cell/bone marrow transplant, and only 30 per cent of patients will find a match within their family.

"Their best hope is finding a match within their own ethnic community," said Pride.

The One Match network is linked to 63 different registries around the world.

In Canada more than 250,000 people have registered to be bone marrow donors, and worldwide there are more than 13 million registered donors.

"There is always a great need," said Pride.

"It is a great need for all diverse communities, especially younger people," she said.

For more information go to [www.onematch.ca](http://www.onematch.ca)

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