

Jamaican family calls on Halton residents for help

Bone marrow donor needed

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
Special to The Champion

Afro-Canadians throughout Halton are being asked to participate in life-saving efforts for a young Jamaican man.

With former municipal councillor Mary Long as his "backbone," 21-year-old Craig Redwood is desperately looking for a bone marrow donor to combat his chronic myeloid leukemia.

Neither his mother Patricia or his two sisters are a match, which leaves the family at the mercy of the Afro-Caribbean community in Metro and surrounding areas to join the Unrelated Bone Marrow Donor Registry (UBMDR).

Only Afro-Canadians or Afro-Caribbeans can provide a bone marrow match due to their large and diverse ethnic mix.

An information session on the registry will be held Saturday, Apr. 5 — from 1 to 2:30 p.m. — at Toronto's Bethlehem United Church on Dufferin Street at Hwy 401.

"Dr. Jeff Lipton at Princess Margaret Hospital says my only chance for long-term survival is through a bone marrow transplant," said Mr. Redwood, diagnosed with chronic myeloid leukemia in his home land of Jamaica in October, 1995. He moved to Mississauga last month. Prior to this he had worked as a library assistant since finishing school.

"A lot of people say I look healthy, but on the inside there's a whole different thing going on. I try to stay optimistic, but some days it's tough."

The disease follows three stages of which Mr. Redwood is presently in the first but slowly gravitating toward the accelerated phase. If left untreated, it will likely claim his life within two to four years. In his case, doctors have estimated a 65 per cent chance of survival with a bone marrow transplant.

His dilemma was first brought to Mrs. Long's attention in the fall at a Jamaican grand market in North York. There she was reunited with a childhood friend from Jamaica — who by coincidence happened to be Mr. Redwood's mother.

"I immediately called some people I thought could help organize fundraising efforts and told them we had to take action," said Mrs. Long, recalling her response after learning of Mr. Redwood's affliction.

With the help of the entire Jamaican community, the family has raised almost \$200,000 for his treatment. The biggest slice has come from Jamaica's Ministry of Health.

Jamaican government representatives in Canada have helped out through fundraisers and Tuesday's press conference in Toronto, where the registry information session was announced.

Prospective donors must attend the meeting to be able to participate in the clinic. The date and location of the clinic will be announced at the session.

An aunt of Mr. Redwood said Mrs. Long has been their backbone through the trying ordeal while his mother said she's "definitely pleased" with the support of the Jamaican community.

In addition to spearheading the wide-spread fundraising drive, Mrs. Long has put Mr. Redwood in touch with Milton's Liz Scholtz, whose six-year-old daughter Deidre underwent a successful bone marrow transplant last spring in her battle with aplastic anemia.

"It's a difficult time, waiting for a donor, I've told him to try to be positive and have basically acted as a sounding board. We need to get Canadians of all ethnic groups on the registry," Mrs. Scholtz said.

Mrs. Long added that a stronger registry base will not only improve Mr. Redwood's odds, but would also serve as a vital investment for the future.

"It's so important because you never know when you're going to need it," she said.

Those interested in making a donation toward Mr. Redwood's treatment can call the family at 1-(905) 828-4717.



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Craig Redwood of Mississauga, seen here with his mom, is calling on Afro-Canadian citizens in Halton to help find a life-saving bone marrow match.

Less static now with new radio

By **BRAD REAUME**
The Champion

With sirens wailing and lights flashing from several pieces of emergency equipment, Halton christened its new \$8.5 million radio-trunking system for public services last week.

The system, several years in the planning and financed through the Infrastructure Works Program, will allow for better communications and management of emergency response.

Most public services with radio communication requirements in Halton have opted to be involved. Police will be its heaviest users, with public works departments, fire departments and the Halton Region conservation authority also on it.

"In an era where people complain about levels of government fighting each other, this is a perfect example of three levels working together," said Oakville-Milton MP Bonnie Brown.

Halton-Peel MP Julian Reed said the network was instituted, despite some difficulties, thanks to the diligence of former regional chair Peter Pomeroy.

"Halton is a much better place for it," he stressed. Approximately 1,200 radios will operate on the system, which requires eight communications towers but virtually eliminates 'dead zones' in radio reception.

"The range of the new system is fabulous and the power is higher," said Milton deputy fire chief Dave Krantz. "It's especially good for rural areas."

The region also kicked off their enhanced 911 system, which allows emergency personnel to track a caller's whereabouts.

It is especially helpful when young children call and cannot indicate where they live, as well as for people in distress who cannot speak.

"The 911 system is a perfect example of a partnership between agencies," said Halton fire co-ordinator Bill Cunningham. "It is refreshing from an emergency services perspective that there is no turf protection."

Eamonn Oldham of Oldham Engineers Inc., specialists in wireless communications, was on hand at the radio trunking ceremony.

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