



The Sunflower Fund
Hope begins with you

MEDIA RELEASE

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SKEEM SAAM ACTOR ERIC MACHERU JOINS THE SUNFLOWER FUND'S NATIONAL DRIVE TO FIGHT BLOOD DISEASES

[18 February 2019] Former Ajax Cape Town soccer star and actor Eric Macheru is teaming up with The Sunflower Fund, for a national drive to create awareness and education about blood diseases and to drive interest for people to register as blood stem cells donors.

Eric has been an Ambassador of Hope for The Sunflower Fund for 2 years and regularly gives of his time to engage young people to help grow the stem cell donor registry.

“What most people don’t understand is that there are various blood diseases that can affect you at any given point in your life,” says Eric better known as Leeto in the popular soapie Skeem Saam. “There is so much misinformation about blood stem cell donation and people don’t respond, because of a lack of information,” he continued.

Common blood disorders include anaemia, bleeding disorders such as haemophilia and blood cancers such as leukaemia, lymphoma, and myeloma. For many patients diagnosed with blood diseases, the only hope of cure is a (bone marrow) blood stem cell transplant.

Patients from all ages and races can find themselves in need of a transplant and in such an instance they are looking for their genetic twin. The chances of finding this match is 1:100 000 and the best chance of a match is within your same ethnic background. There is only a 25% chance that a sibling will be a match. The remaining 75% chance depends on an unrelated matching donor being found. Black patients around the world are at a disadvantage due to the underrepresentation of black, coloured and indian donors in the global donor pool.

“People don’t realise that it is painless to register as a donor, or that you only donate once in your life and that there are no major side effects of being a donor,” Eric added.

A blood stem cell transplant as it is more commonly known today, is essentially a procedure where a person’s defective cells in their bone marrow is replaced by healthy ones from their donor. For the donor, it involves a fairly painless procedure that can take up to 6 hours, which is very similar to donating platelets and with no major side effects.

The Sunflower Fund is calling on individuals between the ages of 18-45 years, in general good health with a weight of more than 50kgs and a BMI of less than 40 to register as donors. Upcoming donor drives include: 2 March 2019 from 09h00 to 13h00 at Spine Road High in Mitchell’s Plain Cape Town.

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“Many people say they would try their utmost to save a life if ever confronted with a situation where someone is in need of help,” says Eric. “We want people to understand that there is a stranger out there in need of a match and you might well be that life-saver they are waiting for,” he continued.

“If you are willing to consider helping anyone in need of a transplant for whom you might be a match, contact The Sunflower Fund and get registered telephonically or join us in person at one of the drives. The entire process will take less than 10 minutes of your time,” he added.

“I am proud to be associated with The Sunflower Fund and to be able to play a small part in the fight against blood diseases, help spread awareness so we can 3000 donors in March” Macheru added.

To find out more visit www.sunflowerfund.org or call them toll free on 0800 12 10 82. ENDS.

About The Sunflower Fund

The Sunflower Fund is a donor recruitment centre and stem cell registry that is part of a global network, dedicated to creating awareness about blood diseases and stem cell donation, recruiting blood stem cell donors and maintaining a registry of committed donors.

The Sunflower Fund pays for the cost of the tissue-type testing. This is fundamental to saving the lives of South Africans who need a stem cell transplant. The chance of finding a matching donor is 1 in 100,000 – and as ethnic origin plays a significant role in the search for a donor, South Africa’s rainbow nation is at a distinct disadvantage, requiring a large pool of prospective donors.

Should you wish to become a donor, support one of the fundraising projects or make a financial contribution, please contact The Sunflower Fund on toll-free number: 0800 12 10 82. Visit www.sunflowerfund.org.za to learn more or look out for the DONATE button to make a cash donation via the website.

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