



The Sunflower Fund

Hope begins with you

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### RIAAN MANSER AND THE TWO OCEANS AQUARIUM JOIN THE SUNFLOWER FUND'S TRIBUTE TO STEM CELL DONORS

**[September 2018]** Since the first bone marrow transplant performed in the 1950s, over a million patients have received a transplant of blood stem cells for the treatment of a wide variety of blood cancers and other diseases of the blood and bone marrow. Often, transplantation using healthy cells from a donor may be the only chance of cure. When there is no suitable donor within the family, an unrelated donor, who could be from a completely different part of the world, may be the best match for the patient. The World Marrow Donor Association's (WMDA) global network of organisations makes cooperation and a global exchange of information possible. This strong collaboration has helped hundreds of thousands of patients internationally.

The network of organisations representing approximately 32 million blood stem cell donors from 55 different countries, will celebrate the fifth World Marrow Donor Day (WMDD) on 21 September 2019. The primary purpose is to thank all donors and highlight global cooperation in blood stem cell transplantation. On every continent, blood stem cell and cord blood organisations are organising events to share in the celebration and to spread awareness about the need for donors.

South African Adventurer and Ambassador of The Sunflower Fund – Riaan Manser is joining in the global celebrations from the Two Oceans Aquarium in Cape Town. He will make a daring statement to thank donors around the world by diving into the Ocean Exhibit, which is home to rays, musselcrackers, green sea turtles a giant guitar fish and more.

"The many creatures that inhabit our oceans are as diverse as the ethnic and cultural groups that make up our Rainbow Nation," says Maryke Musson, Curator at the Two Oceans Aquarium.

"As such, we felt that the comparison of diving amongst the complex diversity of our ocean species and observing the beauty created by bringing them all together, would inspire South Africans to come together and join The Sunflower Fund in fighting blood diseases," Musson added.

Riaan Manser is known for making the statement that there is an ocean between saying and doing. He is also known for pushing fear aside and just going for it to achieve and do what has never been done before.

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PO Box 31163 Tokai 7966 Cape Town, South Africa  
Office 106B Richmond Centre, 174-206 Main Road, Plumstead, 7800  
Telephone: 021 701 0661 • Fax: 021 701 6790 • e-mail: info@sunflowerfund.org  
Regional offices: Johannesburg and Durban

**Directors:** J Sedgwick (Chairman), Dr M. du Toit, B. Jessop, Dr L. Mpuntsha,  
Prof. R Ramesar, D. Walker **CEO:** Alana James

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“Diving into this exhibit which holds 1.6 million litres of seawater is my way of making a statement to people to face the fear of the unfamiliar and make the bold yet simple decision to become a stem cell donor,” says Manser.

“Achieving incredible and memorable moments like coming face to face with some of the incredible inhabitants of our oceans, fade into insignificance in comparison with saving a life, like many stem cell donors have done globally,” Manser continued.

A bone marrow or blood stem cell donor is a volunteer adult person who is willing to donate blood stem cells for blood stem cell or marrow transplantation to a patient in need of a life-saving transplant.

“The Sunflower Fund is honoured that over the years more than 75 000 people have responded to the call to become donors,” says The Sunflower Fund’s CEO Alana James.

“We thank you donor, for being willing to save a life and call on others out there who have not yet registered to act now and become donors,” concluded James.

To find out more about being a donor or to join The Sunflower Fund’s stem cell registry you can call 0800 12 10 82 or visit [www.sunflowerfund.org.za](http://www.sunflowerfund.org.za).

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### **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 the toll-free number: 0800 12 10 82 or via WhatsApp 074 715 0212. You can also visit [www.sunflowerfund.org](http://www.sunflowerfund.org) to learn more or look out for the DONATE button to make a cash donation via the website.



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Released on behalf of The Sunflower Fund by:

Traci Sassenberg

[traci@sunflowerfund.org](mailto:traci@sunflowerfund.org)

Tel: 021 701 0661

Cell: 083 303 9200

For more information or for interviews contact: Traci Sassenberg or Kim Webster on 021 701 0661.