



MEDIA RELEASE FOR APPROVAL

MOM APPEALS TO COMMUNITY TO HELP SAVE 8 YEAR OLD SON'S LIFE

[February] With the school year now officially underway, most parents are concerned with afterschool activities and extra mural lessons to keep their little ones stimulated and occupied. However, the Lotz family and many others like them, face the year ahead with a great deal of concern over something much more serious when it comes to their little boy.

In January 2016 at the age of 3 years, Liam Lotz was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia (ALL) – the most common childhood cancer of the blood and bone marrow that affects white blood cells.

A tough 3 years and 4 months of treatment followed the initial diagnosis and the cancer went into remission.

“For seven months we tasted a ‘new normal’,” says Benita Lotz, Liam Lotz’ mom. “We were finally able to focus on doing all the things we missed out on,” she continued.

However, not long after the family had started their new normal, the illness returned.

Liam was a fun-loving happy little boy with lots of smiles and hugs for all. His shock diagnosis came after his mom spotted little red dots on his skin. He also complained that his legs were sore and he had a number of bruises. Similar symptoms returned this time round. On 21 January 2020, the family learnt that the cancer has returned. Liam has just started a new protocol of treatment at almost 8 years of age, and urgently requires a blood stem cell (bone marrow) transplant. He does not have a sibling or family member that is a match and as such, he requires an unrelated matching donor.

“A patient has the best chance of finding a match from someone within the same cultural or ethnic background as them,” says Kim Webster, Head of Communications at The Sunflower Fund. “We are essentially looking for Liam’s genetic twin and there is a 1 in 100 000 chance of finding this match,” Webster continued.

“There is currently no matching donor for Liam. To give him the best chance of finding his life-saving donor, we need South African’s from all walks of life to register,” added Webster.

If you are between the ages of 18 and 45 years with a consistent weight of more than 50kgs and a BMI of less than 40, you could be eligible to become a donor.

“Many of us go through life with a bucket list of things we want to achieve but most of our lists don’t include wanting to save a life. I wonder why,” says Benita Lotz.

“We need your help desperately, because really the only thing we want on our bucket list is to see our son grow up to be a courageous young man,” concluded Lotz.



The Sunflower Funds assists patients fighting life-threatening blood disorders by trying to find their matching donor, through actively recruiting donors and maintaining a registry of donors committed to helping anyone in need of a stem cell transplant.

Registering as a donor is non-invasive. After completing a basic health-screening questionnaire, a DNA sample is collected by swabbing the inside of your cheeks for a few seconds with a cotton bud.

Once the HLA (tissue typing) test is completed, your information is stored on The Sunflower Fund's stem cell registry until you are a match for a patient.

You only ever donate stem cells once in your life when you are identified as a match for a patient.

The process to donate is similar to donating blood. It involves no operations, incisions or anesthetic. Blood is drawn out of the body via one arm. It goes through a machine that separates out the stem cells and blood is returned into your body via the other arm.

There is no cost to individuals to become donors, as The Sunflower Fund covers the cost of the DNA test required to register as a donor. There is also no cost to donate stem cell when you are identified as a match for a patient.

A donor recruitment drive will be held at Durbanville Preparatory School on Wednesday 04 March 2020 from 8am to 7pm. If you live in and around the Durbanville community or can make your way there during the course of the day, you are invited to come through and register to help save Liam or another patient like him in need of their life-saving match.

To initiate a drive at your place of work, sports club or community organisation, contact The Sunflower Fund on 0800 12 10 82 or visit www.sunflowerfund.org for more information.

Registering takes less than 10 minutes of your time and you could save a life.

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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 0800 12 10 82 or via WhatsApp 074 715 0212. You can also visit 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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