



The Sunflower Fund

Partnered by DKMS

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

THE SUNFLOWER FUND URGES SOUTH AFRICANS TO REGISTER AS STEM CELL DONORS

[July 2020] Organisations around the country have been operating in a state of business unusual since the beginning of the lockdown in March. Whilst some industries were able to return to normal operations as restrictions have been relaxed, the ongoing need for social distancing has irreversibly changed the game for others.

The Sunflower Fund partnered by DKMS has traditionally relied on various face-to-face engagements such as events and public donor drives to create awareness and education about stem cell donation and to recruit stem cell donors.

A Stem cell or bone marrow transplant, is often the only hope of cure for patients with blood disorders like Leukaemia, sickle cell disease and Thalassaemia to name but a few. In order to have a successful transplant, a patient needs a donor with the same genetic characteristics as them. There is only a 30% chance that a family member might be a match. The remaining 70% chance is that a stranger somewhere in the world might be a perfect match.

With the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for social distancing, The Sunflower Fund partnered by DKMS has had to cancel all public and face to face drives. Even in the midst of the pandemic, every 35 seconds someone somewhere in the world is diagnosed with a blood disorder. As such, there is an ongoing need to recruit donors and build an ethnically diverse registry of committed donors.

Technology has for a long time played an important role in matching donors and patients globally. Doctors can search both locally and internationally for matches on behalf of their patients through a globally linked database, which is used by all registries around the world.

To curb the challenges that COVID-19 has placed on the recruitment of donors, The Sunflower Fund partnered by DKMS has rolled out their online registration platform. Individuals interested in registering can now visit www.sunflowerfund.org and click register to complete the process online. A swab kit will then be couriered to you, so you can now register as a donor without leaving your home.

It only takes two swabs on the inside of your cheek to register as a donor and the online health screening takes less than 10 minutes to complete.

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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 • **e-mail:** info@sunflowerfund.org
Regional offices: Johannesburg and Durban

Directors: Dr Elke Neujahr (Chairperson), Katharina Harf, Prof. Rajkumar Ramesar, Stephan Schumacher, James Sedgwick, Douglas Walker, **CEO:** Alana James

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“With Mandela Day being all about using our collective power to create a global movement for good towards humanity, we would like urge South Africa to use their 67 minutes to help us grow our registry in South Africa,” says Kim Webster Head of Communications at The Sunflower Fund partnered by DKMS.

“It takes about 7 minutes to register, and in one hour you can mobilise your networks to follow suit and become one of more than 32 million people globally committed to saving lives of patients with blood disorders,” Webster continued.

“We all have the power to save a life, all it takes is a decision to just take action,” Webster concluded.

Individuals between 18 and 55 years can register as donors. If you have a consistent weight of more than 50kgs and a BMI of less than 40 you could be eligible to register.

Visit www.sunflowerfund.org and register as a stem cell donor today or call 0800 12 10 82.

About The Sunflower Fund

The Sunflower Fund partnered by DKMS is a donor recruitment centre and stem cell registry for Africa and 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 partnered by DKMS pays for the cost of the tissue-type testing. This is fundamental to saving the lives of South Africans and patients globally 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.

About DKMS

DKMS is an international non-profit organisation dedicated to the fight against blood cancer. Founded in 1991 in Germany by Dr. Peter Harf, DKMS has expanded internationally in recent years by establishing entities in the US, Poland, the UK, Chile, together with BMST in India and in South Africa together with The Sunflower Fund partnered by DKMS. Together, they have registered more than 9.9 million potential blood stem cell donors and have given more than 84,000 patients across the globe a second chance at life by facilitating blood stem cell transplants.

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Media Contact: Kim Webster
Head of Communications
kim@sunflowerfund.org | Cell: 082 227 5209

For more information or for interviews contact: Kim Webster on 082 227 5209 or Traci Sassenberg 083 303 9200.