



Photo: SCOTT SEVEGNY

**Annette Stockley, pictured with her husband Ken, donated her bone marrow to a 14 year-old girl with leukemia about a month ago. Stockley is encouraging others to follow her example**

## *Bone marrow donor gives girl a chance at life*

By SCOTT SEVEGNY

**COVENTRY** – Annette Stockley does not consider what she did as heroic. Rather, she says she has obtained personal satisfaction by donating her bone marrow to an anonymous fourteen year-old girl with leukemia.

“In our lifetime there are few times we would be asked to do such a thing,” said Stockley, who, along with her husband Ken, is the proprietor of the Pool and Patio Center on Sandy Bottom Road.

Her journey to bone marrow donation began in 1990, when her mother passed away. Stockley describes it as such an emotional time, that when she read the story of a

young boy in need of a bone marrow donor in 1992, she immediately signed up. She said the possibility of helping to save the young boy’s life was all she needed to prompt her to sign up.

A few months later, she received a call notifying her that she was a preliminary match and was asked to come in for more tests. Her bone marrow was not needed, as it turned out, because a donor with a better match was found.

Amazingly, earlier this year, she received another call alerting her that she was a preliminary match for someone else in need of a transplant. Stockley explained that to be

called two times over any span of time is quite incredible.

She related the story of one of the doctors who assisted in her procedure who has been on the list since he was 15 years old- and has yet to be called upon to donate.

At this time, Stockley was still reeling from the death of her father a few days before she got the call. Her first reaction was shock that she would be a match, but also a sense of honor that she was chosen. The only thing Stockley was told about the recipient, if she proved to be a match was that she was a 14-year old girl with acute leukemia; federal guidelines prohibit any other personal information from being released.

Stockley went to have more blood work done to determine if she was an ideal match. Once she found out that she would be called upon to donate her blood marrow, “there was no way I could have said no,” she said with a bright smile. “To know that I could save a life is the most exhilarating feeling I could describe.”

Without the transplant, the girl would have had a 0-3 percent chance of survival; with it, those numbers would skyrocket to 50 percent, said Doreen Travers, the National Marrow Donor Program Coordinator.

Stockley said that Travers repeatedly asked her to think about whether she really wanted to donate her marrow. Despite going through a range of emotions prior to the procedure, there was no doubt in her mind that she should do this in hopes of giving this young girl she

didn’t know a chance at survival. “It is an incredible, indescribable feeling – knowing that you have something in your body that you don’t need, that will grow back, and will save a person’s life,” she said.

Stockley went to a hospital in Massachusetts earlier this month to have the procedure done. Up until a week before the procedure, Stockley said she felt very honored. However, her emotion changed to fright as the date of the procedure neared. Despite her trepidation, her commitment to follow through with the donation never wavered.

Before the procedure, Stockley’s anesthesiologist made note of her generosity, noting that she was the only person in the hospital who did not have to be there. Stockley gives high praise to the staff of the hospital and the bone marrow program in Rhode Island for their kindness and warmth throughout her experience. One of the doctors told her, “It is our job to make sure you have a five-star medical experience.” she said.

Using a needle, doctors aspirated her pelvic bone around the base of her spine and withdrew the bone marrow that would be transplanted into the young girl. Since a needle was used, no scar tissue would remain. The only memory of the procedure would be a dull ache that would fade in a week or two.

Stockley said she was aware of the effects of donating by reading the literature provided to her and talking to a couple of past donors. She said they told her of the emotional attachment one gets to the recipient. “It was such a bond,” she said, de-

scribing one of the emotions she felt once her marrow was removed.

“Up until the procedure, I always thought she would make it. After, I became acutely aware she may not make it,” said Stockley candidly. The bone marrow program told her not to feel any guilt if the girl does not survive, she explained. “I realize that I’m giving her a chance at life.”

Her recovery was aided by the support and love of her husband, Ken, and their two children. In fact, Ken, who is very dedicated to the store and hates to drive to Boston, took two days out of work and drove Stockley to the hospital in Massachusetts.

While its only been a few weeks since the procedure, Stockley said that the reports she has received through the program have been positive. Stockley said that the girl is doing as well as can be expected.

For the next year, Stockley and her anonymous recipient can correspond through the Rhode Island Bone Marrow Program. She will also receive a monthly update on the girl’s condition. After that, the two may meet face to face, if both of them agree. Stockley said she looks forward to meeting the girl, but understands if the family wishes to remain unknown.

*For more information about becoming a bone marrow donor, call the National Marrow Donor Program at 1-800-283-8385, extension 564.*