

# Your Baby's Cord Blood Could Save A Life.



## Giving Mothers Something To Talk About

For more information, or to learn how you can participate, contact The Dan Berger Cord Blood Program at [www.danbergercordblood.com](http://www.danbergercordblood.com)

While sitting in the waiting area of Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC's bustling outpatient clinic, a pregnant Kellee Bell waited for her doctor. While waiting, she noticed Magee offered cord blood options through The Dan Berger Cord Blood Program.

Having had two children already — Khiron and Dae'Shaun — Kellee wondered if she could donate her baby's cord blood and was eager to learn how it could benefit others.

A couple of weeks after her doctor's appointment, she watched a TV commercial promoting cord blood donation to help a suffering child. After a successful stem cell transplant, this child was healed. It didn't take much more for a mother of a child with special needs to realize she was going to donate her third baby's cord blood hoping to provide a lifeline to give someone a second chance at life.

Kellee watched her son, Khiron, as he developed hearing difficulties and struggled with speech. It was a very hard time, said Kellee. Eventually, he was diagnosed with autism. Kellee didn't hesitate to call Mary Wiegel, the cord blood manager, to discuss her cord blood donation options. "By donating cord blood it is a good idea and is something that can be remembered forever. I hope there's a few children that we can save just by donating," says Kellee.

After meeting with Mary on a few occasions, she eagerly awaited the birth of her baby girl, Janyah Nicole, to make this one-of-a-kind donation.

Kellee is so passionate about donating cord blood that one day while in the outpatient clinic's waiting room she asked another pregnant mother what she was doing with her baby's cord blood. After much conversation, she handed this mother a Dan Berger Cord Blood Program brochure and told her that the cord blood will be discarded if she doesn't make a decision, "so why not bless someone?"

Kellee wants other mothers to put themselves in someone else's shoes, a mother who has to watch their child suffer. "Donating cord blood is a blessing. Donate that cord, don't be selfish." Kellee hopes to volunteer at the outpatient clinic to educate other moms that if they don't make a cord blood decision "they are missing out on the circle of life." She is glad cord blood is giving mothers something to talk about.

# Your Baby's Cord Blood Could Save A Life.

The blood that remains in the umbilical cord and placenta after the birth of a child, called "cord blood," is a rich source of stem cells for blood and marrow transplants (BMT). Approximately 70 percent of BMT patients do not find matching donors within their families and must receive transplants from donor registries.

As you prepare for the birth of your baby, please consider donating your baby's cord blood. The focus of your labor and delivery remains on you and your baby, and the birth will not be affected by the collection of the cord blood, which is collected after your baby is born.

Cord blood is needed from people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds in order to match the diverse tissue types of patients as closely as possible. We identify the cord blood type and list it on the registry of the National Marrow Donor Program®, which operates the largest and most racially and ethnically diverse donor registry available worldwide. The cord blood is stored in a public cord blood bank until it is needed.

For more information, or to learn how you can participate, contact The Dan Berger Cord Blood Program at Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC at 412-209-7479.



Tiffani Hodges is a grateful mother. When her son, Tristin Ross, was 3 years old, he was diagnosed with stage IV neuroblastoma. His treatment included a bone marrow transplant. Then, at the age of 5, Tristin developed acute myelogenous leukemia (AML) - a fast-growing cancer of the blood and bone marrow. In the past five years, he has received two cord blood transplants at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC. Today, Tristin is a healthy, active 10 year old, with no restrictions, who likes to ride his bike and play outside from dawn to dusk. Tristin's family will forever be thankful to the generous mothers who chose to donate their babies' cord blood to potentially give someone, in this case Tristin, a second chance at life.



**Provide a lifeline to the future  
Donate your baby's cord blood.**



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*Samantha Gallo is a thankful mother.*

*When her son, Drew Gallo, was 3 years old in 2002, he was diagnosed with leukemia. Doctors at Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh decided something had to be done quickly - sooner than waiting for Drew's expectant mother, to give birth to a baby brother or sister who might be a suitable match to donate bone marrow to Drew. The doctors decided on a cord blood transplant: a transfusion of stem cell-rich blood that had been collected from the umbilical cord of a newborn baby and stored in a public cord blood bank. Today, Drew is an active 9-year-old who plays football. In his spare time he sells candy to raise money to increase cord blood collection awareness.*

Provide a **LIFELINE** to the **FUTURE**, donate your baby's **CORD BLOOD!**

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# Metro

## Family support instrumental Umbilical cord collection program to bear Daniel Berger's name

BY SUSAN JACOBS

Associate Editor

When Daniel Berger was battling lymphoma and leukemia, his wife and five sons asked friends, neighbors and colleagues to sign up for the international registry that matches stem cell and bone marrow donors with recipients.

Eventually a match was found, and Berger received two stem cell transplants, and was showing significant signs of improvement when his heart failed. He died on July 2, 2006 at age 73.

Now, to memorialize him, his family is contributing toward an umbilical cord collection program at Magee-Women's Hospital. The Dan Berger Cord Blood Program would encourage mothers and doctors to donate the umbilical cords of newborn babies instead of discarding them, as is usually done.

Blood from the cords, which contain stem cells, could then be extracted and stored in one of three storage banks in the country.

"They should have started this a long time ago," said Carol Berger, Daniel's wife. "It's really important. It's going to be the way of the future."

Magee is one of a few hospitals in the



Daniel Berger

country that are beginning such collection programs, said spokesman Arthur Scully. A hospital in Chicago has been collecting umbilical cords and doing research for some time, and a hospital in Boston is beginning a collection program.

Magee was exploring the option of beginning its own program when the Berger family approached the hospital and offered to help with funding.

"When the family came along it definitely sparked our interest," said Scully. "It gave us the impetus to start full force."

Some \$300,000 over three years will be needed to get the program running. After that, since recipients or insurance companies will pay for the transplanted cells, the program is expected to be self-sustaining. In addition to the money they are contributing, the Bergers are asking others to donate to the program.

A kickoff event for the program is being held at Magee on Monday, Oct. 8, at 10 a.m.

The program comes at a time when the benefits of stem cells are still being explored.

"There is so much research being done," said Scully. Magee has the largest hospital research center in the United States devoted specifically to women and infants, he said.

Magee has been collecting cords on a smaller scale for research for some time. Last year, there were between 150 and 200 donations out of 9,500 deliveries at the hospital.

"We see great potential for growth," said Scully.

Cells from the donated cords may be used for research locally at Magee or be sent to the three national banks, where they will be available for stem cell transplants. These donations will be catalogued according to 10 matching factors and entered into the same international system, which now keeps track of adults

who have provided a tissue sample to indicate their willingness to donate bone marrow or stem cells if they are a match for someone who needs a transplant.

Eventually, families will have the option of paying to put cord blood into storage for private use, should the need ever arise.

Because stem cells can develop into any other type of cell, they are useful in treating a variety of diseases and conditions. Some 70 diseases are now being treated with stem cell transplants, said Scully.

"The beauty of this is the physician can focus on the needs of the mother and infant while a professional extracts blood from the cord," said Scully.

Magee will train personnel to do the extractions from the cords, and is working with the Central Blood Bank of Pittsburgh to hire a recruiter who would educate parents and doctors about the importance of the donations.

Carol Berger said that it is especially important for Jews and other minority groups to donate to such programs.

"We lost 6 million [in the Holocaust]," she said. "There are lots of people who don't have matches."

Daniel Berger, who was a trial lawyer, would have appreciated the good work of the cord donation program, said his wife.

"It means that in the long run many people's lives will be saved," she said.

(Susan Jacobs can be reached at [sjacobs@pittchron.com](mailto:sjacobs@pittchron.com).)

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Your baby's *Cord Blood* could *save a life!*



## WHY ONE FAMILY DONATED CORD BLOOD TWICE

After donating their first daughter's cord blood in 2007 at Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC, The Dan Berger Cord Blood Program's first cord blood donors — Matt and Kayla Lang — welcomed their second child, Kadence Scarlett, on May 13, 2010. Delivered at West Penn Hospital in Pittsburgh, PA, the Langs were relieved to hear that the program expanded to every maternity hospital in Pittsburgh. "We were so proud of donating the first time, we wanted to do it again. It's something that we can do that's easy, free, and painless, and we know it can change someone's life," says Ms. Lang.

Cord blood, or the blood left in the umbilical cord and the placenta right after the baby is born, is rich in stem cells. These stem cells have been used to treat diseases such as leukemia and lymphomas. The baby does not need cord blood after being delivered and the Langs refused to let this vital resource be discarded.

One factor influencing their decision to donate publicly both times was that Kayla's friend, who suffered from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, was treated with a stem cell transplant. Another influential factor was Matt's father who died of cancer in 2005. The Langs want to do all they can to help people battle cancer and other diseases treatable by cord blood stem cell transplants. "We need people like the Langs to recognize the great need for stem cells and how easy it is to donate," said Carol Berger, widow of Dan Berger.

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# The Dan Berger Cord Blood Program

[www.danbergercordblood.com](http://www.danbergercordblood.com)

## The Lifesaving Potential of Cord Blood: Ryder's Story

At just 18 months old, Ryder McDermitt was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (AML), an adult form of leukemia. After relocating about 90 miles from home to Pittsburgh for several months, Ryder and his mother, Karrie, grappled with the reality of his cancer diagnosis. Thanks to a bone marrow transplant, Ryder has been in remission for about one year. According to Karrie, "If it weren't for a cord blood donation, my son would not be here today."

When Ryder experienced numerous ear infections, easy bruising, arm pain, and high fevers, the thought of a cancer diagnosis never crossed Karrie's mind. After blood work confirmed Ryder had AML, he began the long road of cancer recovery at Children's Hospital of UPMC of Pittsburgh.

June 11, 2007 marked Ryder's cancer diagnosis date. For six months, he endured five rounds of chemotherapy. He went into remission in January 2008 only to face a relapse the following August. In September 2008, he endured more chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

The side effects of Ryder's treatment ensued with a vengeance. He experienced high fevers, reaching 104 degrees at times, vomiting, diarrhea, and other flu-like symptoms.

Shortly after chemotherapy and radiation, Ryder underwent a bone marrow transplant by Dr. Rakesh Goyal of Children's Hospital.

After about one year, Ryder is in remission. Periodically, he undergoes check-ups on all his organs because of their exposure to high levels of toxicity during his cancer treatment. It is possible he will face organ complications in the future. He also goes once a month for blood tests, and sometimes gets periodic intravenous immunoglobulin to boost his immune system until his body can make it sufficiently on its own.

Since nearly half of Ryder's life has been spent in hospitals wearing slippers, not shoes, his feet slightly turn in toward his ankles causing knee pain; he will have to see an orthopedist. "He gets out of breath and tires more easily now, but that is a small price to pay after what Ryder's been through," adds Karrie.

Karrie's stepdaughter, Veronica, recently delivered a baby girl, and broke into tears after learning the hospital did not offer options for cord blood donation. "She is a young mother who wanted to save a life," states Karrie.

Karrie is concerned women are not educated enough about their baby's umbilical cord blood and its life-saving abilities. Donating cord blood poses no harm to the mother or baby because it is collected after the baby is delivered. "You're bringing joy into the world, but you could also be bringing joy to someone in need."

