

---

**Press Contact:**

Jo Roberson Edwards  
Jo Roberson Edwards & Associates, LLC  
Tel: 404.758.8899  
Email: [joedwards@6dconnections.com](mailto:joedwards@6dconnections.com)

**YWCA Contact:**

Tahirah Mahan  
Senior Marketing Associate  
Tel: 404.527.7575, x105  
Email: [tmahan@ywcaatlanta.org](mailto:tmahan@ywcaatlanta.org)

---

## **YWCA of Greater Atlanta Hosts Bone Marrow Drive with Celebrity Entrepreneur Farrah Gary**

ATLANTA, GA – On March 23, 2006, The YWCA of Greater Atlanta will host a Bone Marrow Drive with Farrah Gray, best selling author and Spokesman for the National Marrow Donor Program. He is a partner in the nationwide campaign to bring attention to the dire need to increase the number of African-American and other minority donors in The National Marrow Donor Program Registry.

Justine Boyd, CEO, YWCA of Greater Atlanta, understands the crisis and the need to find matching donors because her mother suffered from Leukemia and passed away when Justine was only 18 years-old. "It is so important for the Atlanta community to support this effort. I know firsthand how this devastating disease impacts not only the patient, but the entire family. Not only my mother, but an uncle died from Leukemia and currently my five year-old nephew, Michael Noguera is suffering from Leukemia. Though research has produced many milestones, still too many lose their lives because there are not enough bone marrow or blood stem cell donors. I encourage everyone to attend and save a life."

This issue hits home for Gray because his sister, Greek Gray, was diagnosed with AML Leukemia a year ago, and after she was in remission for only six months, just recently relapsed. "The cancer has radicalized, is moving fast, and there is no present donor match," said Gray. Donor databases in the U.S. are sorely void of matching criteria for African-Americans and other minorities.

Many in the entertainment industry remember Nelly's younger sister who passed away from the same condition unable to find a donor match. "Celebrities such as Nelly and -- more recently -- Farrah Gray lending their status to bring attention to the need for African-American Donors will enhance our chances of recruiting more African-Americans, and saving more lives," said Dr. Jeff Chell, CEO of the National Marrow Donor Program.

"My campaign is to bring a transplant not only to my sister, but to the many patients worldwide in need of a marrow or blood stem cell donor and increase the number of donors in The National Marrow Donor Program Registry," said Gray. The challenge for African-American patients is that bone marrow and blood stem cell transplants require matching certain tissue traits of the donor and patient. Because these traits are inherited, a patient's most likely match is someone of the same heritage. African-American patients will have a greater chance of finding matching donors when more African-Americans join the registry and become committed donors.

A person of any race, ethnicity or gender who is 18 to 60 years old (up until 61<sup>st</sup> birthday) and who meets donation health guidelines can become a potential volunteer donor. The National Marrow Donor Program has established a registry of approximately 5.5 million potential volunteer bone marrow and blood stem cell donors and, since its inception in 1987, has facilitated 20,000 transplants. However, the ethnic diversity of the bone marrow registry is quite low. Although African-Americans make up 12% of the population, they only account for 6% of the bone marrow registry. For many, that small percentage can mean the difference between life and death.

To join the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP) to volunteer for Marrow and Blood Cell Donation call 1-800-627-7692. To receive a Donor Registration Form, or to contact a local donor center associated with the National Marrow Donor Program, visit [www.marrow.org](http://www.marrow.org) or [www.greekgrayleukemiafoundation.org](http://www.greekgrayleukemiafoundation.org). For more information and for people who want to host a blood drive in their area, please go to [www.GGLF.org](http://www.GGLF.org).

**The Bone Marrow Drive is scheduled for Thursday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> from 4 pm to 6 pm at the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, 599 Mitchell Street, Atlanta, Georgia 30314. The ABC News program, 20/20, will film the Bone Marrow Drive on March 23<sup>rd</sup> for an April 14<sup>th</sup> broadcast.**