



LifeSouth Community Blood Centers

THE FIVE POINTS OF LIFE TEAM 2002

The Five Points of Life (FPOL) is a program of LifeSouth Community Blood Centers, a not for profit community blood center serving Alabama, Florida and Georgia. The program's mission is to increase national awareness of the need for people to share their lives with others through donation of one or more of the five points – whole blood, apheresis, bone marrow, cord blood and organ/tissue.

A dozen FPOL team members will spend seven weeks on bicycles, traveling from International Falls, Minnesota to St. Petersburg, Florida. Each team member, selected through a national application process, has a personal story about how donation has impacted his or her life. Every team member is a blood donor, but each story is different. Together they provide a compelling vision of how donations, or the lack of a donation, can impact lives. These stories will be shared at more than 50 blood drives and donor awareness events organized by local donor organizations in the nine states visited during the ride.

In 2002, for the first time, the FPOL Ride has an international component. Two blood centers on two continents have joined forces to increase awareness of saving lives. During April 2002, seven alumni riders from prior FPOL teams are participating in the National Blood Awareness Cycle Tour produced by South African National Blood Services. In turn, six South African cyclists will join the FPOL Team 2002. They will join in shifts so that there are 12 cyclists on the traveling team at all times. The South African participants will be announced at the conclusion of the South African Cycle Tour.

Nancy Davis of Anchorage, Alaska, is a returning member of the 2000 team. Davis has first hand knowledge of what the shortage of donors can mean. She and her son, Sean, spent 20 months far from home in a Ronald McDonald house waiting for a heart/lung transplant that never happened. He died in 1998 at the age of five. She now works as the Public Education Coordinator for Life Alaska Tissue and Organ Donation, providing community outreach programs about the importance of donation. In addition, Davis is a regular blood donor with the Blood Bank of Alaska and a member of the National Marrow Donor Program's registry.

Rodney Ford, from Oklahoma City, Okla., is on the NMDP registry and is serving a three-year term on the Oklahoma Governor's Organ Donor Education and Awareness Program Advisory Council. He is a federal bank examiner with the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency. He is also a returning FPOL team member and his focus is on increasing increased minority participation in donation. Ford is the only cyclist to have been chosen for each FPOL team.

Jason Millard from Gainesville, Fla., is a senior at the University of Florida and also part-time phlebotomist at LifeSouth. He is majoring in Sports Management and currently completing an internship with the Auburn University Baseball Team. Jason is already a two-gallon blood donor and has seen the need for donors within his own family. His mother received a bone marrow transplant and donated platelets as part of her treatment for breast cancer.

Michelle Nichols from Virginia Beach, Va., worked during the 1980s in a dialysis center where many of the patients were on the waiting list for a kidney. She wanted to help, and after years of waiting for the right opportunity, donated one of her kidneys to an anonymous recipient last year. She is looking forward to meeting him someday in the future. Michelle has also been on the NMDP registry for more than 10 years.

Richard Ritari from Gainesville, Fla., an avid photographer, works as a Senior Information Systems Engineer for Medical Manager Research and Development, a division of WebMD Corporation in Alachua, Fla. He is very active in the community, volunteering regularly with Habitat for Humanity and the Gainesville Track Club. Richard can also be seen riding his GoldWing motorcycle.

Gary Smith from Harrisburg, Penn., is Chief of Park Operations and Maintenance Division for the Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks. Two years ago he donated his bone marrow to a woman needing a bone marrow transplant to fight leukemia. Gary enjoys canoeing and camping and is a leader of the Venture Crew, a Boy Scouts of America program for experienced scouts. He also conducts bicycle maintenance clinics through the local cycle club.

Heather Swallow from Boulder, Colo., was struck head-on by a vehicle in 1998 while riding her bike. It took five surgeries and donated tendons to repair the trauma to her legs. Heather is a free-lance artist, working predominantly in the architecture and fine arts field. She enjoys traveling and has been a member of the Boulder Cycling Team for four years.

Michael Williams from Beech Bluff, Tenn., is a Team Leader at the Proctor & Gamble Pringle's Operations in Jackson, Tenn. He is a blood recipient as well as a donor. After a motorcycle accident in 1977, he needed blood during the treatment for a fractured leg. Mike and his wife serve as foster parents and have hosted three foreign exchange students.

Anthony Yeni, a rabbi from Cherry Hill, N.J., received a donated liver in 2000. He is an active volunteer with The Gift of Life program in Philadelphia and rode a day with the FPOL 2000 team. Tony serves at the University of Pennsylvania as the clergy on staff counseling individuals who have received or are waiting for life-sharing donations.