



*a program of  
LifeSouth Community Blood Centers*

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **LOCAL BLOOD DONORS SELECTED FOR NATIONAL CYCLE TEAM**

Gainesville, Fla. – Jason Millard and Richard Ritari have been selected for the Five Points of Life Team 2002. Millard and Ritari are two of a dozen cyclists chosen to promote lifesaving donation as they ride their bicycles from Minnesota to Florida in September and October of 2002.

The Five Points of Life 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.

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.

Ritari, Senior Information Systems Engineer for Medical Manager Research and Development, a division of WebMD Corporation in Alachua, Fla., is passionate about promoting donation. He did not become a blood donor until the age of 32 when a friend told him, "You need to donate blood, it is something you should do." Until that day, he had never thought about it. He donated

whole blood a few times then became an apheresis donor, providing platelets for patients undergoing chemotherapy, fighting blood disorders such as leukemia or other diseases affecting the body's ability to replace the needed cells. He has now made more than 70 donations.

Ritari is involved in a variety of community organizations. He has volunteered hundreds of hours with Habitat for Humanity and is an active member of the Florida Track Club and the Gainesville Cycling Club. He is an avid photographer and is often seen riding his GoldWing motorcycle.

Jason Millard is a senior at the University of Florida majoring in Sports Management. He is spending the spring semester interning with the Auburn University Athletic Department; working with the Baseball team's Event Management staff. He has always been a baseball fan and really enjoys going to a ball field to work every day. He also enjoys spending time with his family, reading history books and playing golf.

Millard is a two-gallon blood donor and has experienced the need for blood within his own family. His mother had a bone marrow transplant and received donated platelets as part of her treatment for breast cancer. He also works part-time for LifeSouth as a phlebotomist.

Ritari and Millard will meet their teammates when they gather in International Falls, Minn., to start their seven-week ride to Saint Petersburg, Fla.

**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.

**Nancy Davis**, from Anchorage, Alaska is the only other returning rider. She knows what the shortage of donations can mean. In 1998, her five-year old son, Sean, died after 20 months on the waiting list for a heart/lung transplant that never came. Davis decided to join the NMDP registry and become a regular blood donor after hearing the many personal stories from recipients during the FPOL Ride 2000.

**Michelle Nichols** from Virginia Beach, Va., worked in a dialysis center where many of the patients were on the waiting list for a kidney. Last year, she donated one of her kidneys to an anonymous recipient.

**Gary Smith**, Chief of Park Operations and Maintenance Division for the Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks, lives in Harrisburg. Two years ago he donated bone marrow to a woman needing a bone marrow transplant to fight leukemia.

While riding her bike, **Heather Swallow** from Boulder, Colo., was struck head-on by a vehicle in 1998. It took five surgeries and donated tendons to repair the trauma to her legs.

**Michael Williams**, a Team Leader at Proctor & Gamble's Pringle's Operations in Jackson, Tenn., is a blood recipient as well as a donor. He and his wife have hosted three foreign exchange students and also serve as foster parents.

**Tony 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.

The FPOL Ride 2002 is the first to include exchange riders from South Africa. Six cyclists, all former participants in the South African National Blood Services' National Blood Awareness Cycle Tour, will be selected in April to join the FPOL team, helping spread the universal message of sharing life with others through donation.

Corporate sponsors make the Five Points of Life Ride possible. Sponsors include Ortho-Clinical Diagnostics, a Johnson & Johnson company, Johnson & Johnson, Roche Diagnostics, the Fenwal Division of Baxter Healthcare, Gambro BCT, Saturn/UAW, the Alpha One Foundation, Centra Industries and the Florida Coalition on Donation.

Additional information about becoming a donor is available through the following national donor organizations. For blood and apheresis donations, contact the American Association of Blood Banks at [www.aabb.org](http://www.aabb.org) or 800-458-9388; for organ & tissue donation contact the Coalition on Donation at [www.shareyourlife.org](http://www.shareyourlife.org) or 800-355-SHARE and for marrow and cord blood donation contact the National Marrow Donor Program at [www.marrows.org](http://www.marrows.org) or 800-MARROW-2.